



# Evaluation Report

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Evaluation Division

## Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders

September 2020

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# **Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders**

## **A program evaluation of program outcomes and impacts on Fellows and their communities**

**September 2020**

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### **DISCLAIMER**

The evaluation and report were led by Megan Philbin, Cynthia Rathinasamy, Margie Ferris Morris, Mira Gupta, Molly Teas, and Allison Kubick. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Department of State or the United States Government.

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## ACRONYMS

BE	Business & Entrepreneurship
CL	Civic Leadership
DOS	U.S. Department of State
ECA	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PDE	Professional Development Experience
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
PM	Public Management
PRA	Paperwork Reduction Act
RLC	Regional Leadership Center
SMRA	Social Media Research and Analysis
SOW	Statement of Work
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
U.S.	United States
USADF	U.S. African Development Foundation
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
YALI	Young African Leaders Initiative

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), launched in 2010, is a signature effort of the U.S. Government (USG). The program's purpose is to invest in the next generation of African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across sub-Saharan Africa. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of YALI that empowers emerging leaders through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking.

The purpose of the Mandela Washington Fellowship evaluation was to (1) examine the degree to which the U.S.-based components are meeting the program's stated goals; (2) review the impact on advancing DOS strategic policy priorities; and (3) assess how Fellowship Alumni operationalize skills and knowledge gained during their U.S. exchange experience. The U.S. exchange components examined include the Academic and Leadership Institutes (Institutes), Professional Development Experience (PDE), Reciprocal Exchange, and the Washington, DC Summit. The evaluators reviewed seven evaluation questions (EQs) including Impact on Fellowship Alumni, Impact on Communities, Supporting Public Diplomacy Goals, Supporting Foreign Policy Goals, and Process Improvement. The evaluation covered the 2014 – 2018 Fellowship cohorts. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation can support program improvements

## Evaluation Design

The evaluation team used a mixed methods approach to data collection, gathering both quantitative and qualitative primary data. Primary data sources included online surveys (with quantitative and qualitative questions), stakeholder interviews (domestic and international)<sup>1</sup>, and review of the Fellowship's social media penetration (known as social media research and analysis). Secondary data sources were included through document reviews. The team analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to answer the EQs, illustrate Alumni lessons learned, and draw linkages between the Fellowship program and outcomes.

## Findings / Conclusions

### EQ1 Key Findings

On an individual level, the Fellowship advanced Alumni's professional development. Alumni cited skills and knowledge gained, including leadership, community engagement, business plan development, confidence building, civic engagement, public speaking, presenting, elevator pitches, advocacy strategies, and report-writing. These skills transferred to work in their home countries.

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<sup>1</sup> ECA and IREX stakeholders were consulted to gather background, context, and goal / objectives information related to the Mandela Washington Fellowship. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, findings, conclusions, and recommendations were primarily drawn from the following stakeholder groups: Fellows (2014 – 2018 cohorts), African and U.S. community members, Institute staff, PDE hosts, and Reciprocal Exchange awardees.



Additionally, the Fellowship helped Fellows achieve or make progress towards their professional and personal goals. The top skills and knowledge acquired through the Fellowship that contributed to achieving goals include leadership, community engagement, demonstrating confidence, civic engagement, data-informed decision-making, and building partnerships. Fellows noted they gained new jobs, used acquired skills/knowledge to manage organizations or teams, and identified follow-on learning to succeed in their profession. PDEs and Reciprocal Exchange projects also served as an important source of professional development and growth by opening doors, contributing to skill development, and expanding relationships and networks.

Fellows noted they had become more effective leaders, and gained new opportunities following the Fellowship. Fellows felt their improved writing and communication skills helped them become better coworkers and team leaders. Learning how to build teams and networks helped the Fellows form partnerships, meet others within their disciplines, and better define their target audience. They received more job offers and/or promotions, higher paying work, internships, and offers to speak at events as a result of their Fellowship. Some opportunities arose directly from their Fellowship participation, such as joining the YALI Regional Board; working with U.S. embassies; and securing United States African Development Foundation (USADF) grants.

### EQ1 Conclusions

Fellowship activities and experiences expanded Fellows' leadership skills and represented the most appreciated and most applicable skills post-Fellowship.

In addition to leadership skills, Fellows achieved professional and personal goals – survey results indicate that the Fellowship, PDEs, and Reciprocal Exchanges had net-positive individual impacts on the Fellows. Few respondents failed to learn skills or meet their professional and personal goals.

The PDEs, when well-matched to the Fellows' needs, were life changing. While the Reciprocal Exchange represented a small component of the Fellowship and involved less time in the Fellows' countries, it had a significant impact on both the Fellows and their communities and organizations.

### EQ2 Key Findings

The content and structure of the Fellowship was created to support Fellows returning home to serve as leaders in their communities. Data demonstrated the skills, training, and access to resources provided through the program strengthened the Fellows' capacity to serve their home communities. This included leveraging program connections (e.g., other Fellows) and sharing their tangible skills around leadership, community engagement, design thinking, grant writing, etc., with their communities.

The Fellowship inspired new ideas for how Fellows could serve their communities, such as by connecting people with opportunities, running after-school programs, taking on community leadership positions, bringing new solutions to community challenges, and expanding engagement with various stakeholder groups.

The program also exposed Fellows to community service. Many Fellows reported their first exposure to the concept of community service came through activities organized by their Institutes. They found volunteerism quite novel and unlike anything they had participated in in their home countries. Through these activities, Fellows learned the importance of giving back to their communities. Many embraced community service and have continued these efforts after they returned home.

### EQ2 Conclusions

One of the most valuable contributions of the Fellowship to Fellows was increased confidence as leaders and in their abilities to address challenges and realize their goals. The U.S. exchange and resources provided Fellows with key support to look for opportunities to serve as change agents in their communities and expanded their network of like-minded peers.

Community service represents a significant pathway through which Fellowship Alumni give back to their home communities. While some were reluctant to volunteer time towards activities that were not relevant to their professional goals, many were eager to introduce community service in their home countries. With the knowledge they gained on how to organize community activities, Fellows implemented a wide variety of community service projects in their home communities.

### EQ3 Key Findings

The Reciprocal Exchange had both short-and long-term impacts in Fellows' home communities. Generally, impacts on African communities included: promoting engagement with the U.S private sector; increasing knowledge or skills of the Fellow, their organization or community; and/or bringing a new technology. Reciprocal Exchange projects also improved the skills and lives of targeted groups by addressing needs specific to African communities' contexts, sharing business incubation methods, and applying innovation for new or improved products and technologies. Further, Reciprocal Exchange projects supported communities by conducting capacity building and knowledge exchange around civic leadership and awareness of human rights topics.

Fellows also benefited from Reciprocal Exchange projects through enhanced ability to access funds, grants, and loans to continue or expand their initiatives. The U.S. recipients of Reciprocal Exchange Awards (Reciprocal Exchange Awardees) have provided technical support to funding searches and/or directly sought funding for initiatives.

### EQ3 Conclusions

Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Fellows developed strong personal and professional relationships through frequent communication and collaboration on projects. These relationships often went beyond the initial Reciprocal Exchange project and benefited others in the organization and community.

Additionally, there were tangible short-, and potentially long-, term impacts on both African and U.S. communities. The exchange often elevated the work of the Fellow, with some

Fellows receiving awards, certificates, or recognitions. In some cases, Fellows became eligible for additional funding in the future, and participants could earn income. The Reciprocal Exchange program changed communities and organizations and sometimes helped strengthen ties between the United States and Africa.

#### EQ4 Key Findings

The Fellowship benefited local American communities in multiple ways. The program enhanced globalization<sup>2</sup> and cross-cultural understanding of the United States; increased Americans' job skills through Reciprocal Exchange projects; and enhanced U.S. community knowledge of and connection to African countries. The Fellowship also strengthened ties and inspired new partnerships between host institutes, local organizations, and corporations; and generated multiple new projects and partnerships to benefit the United States. These projects included Fellows contributing to U.S. college classrooms via videoconferencing, participating in community-led events in the United States, and conducting community service projects during the U.S. exchange.

#### EQ4 Conclusions

The Fellowship helped globalize Institutes and broadened U.S. communities' cross-cultural connections and understanding. In some cases, U.S.-Africa projects and partnerships formalized connections to provide tangible and intangible benefits to communities and stronger United States-Africa ties. Finally, although the community service component was a small part of the Fellowship program, it strengthened relationships between the United States and Africa and positively impacted U.S. communities. Host organizations greatly valued and appreciated the practical help and support they received from the Fellows.

#### EQ5 Key Findings

The foundations of lasting and productive relationships began with the Fellows' time in the United States. Fellows developed or honed networking skills at the Institutes where they met faculty, Africans from other countries, community members, and others. Participants in the PDEs established additional work-related relationships and expanded their networks. Fellows used these connections on return to their countries, where they engaged with Alumni and the larger YALI network.

U.S. embassies play a central role in post-Fellowship engagement by facilitating many opportunities for networking and engagement in Fellows' home countries, such as providing space for events or inviting Fellows to Embassy events and Mandela Washington Fellowship recruiting events. The country-based Alumni Associations, YALI Network, and Fellowship social media platforms are also vital channels for networking and collaboration among Fellows upon their return home. The productive associations and connections Fellows access through formal and informal Fellowship-driven channels have led to opportunities to attend conferences, collaborate on business or research ideas, share technical and business advice, and build friendships and alliances between countries.

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<sup>2</sup> Globalization, as used in this report, refers to the process of interchange of world views, ideas, and other aspects of culture.

### EQ5 Conclusions

The Fellowship and its engagement with Fellows benefits future African leaders and the United States' ties with African countries. For example, the PDE gives Fellows hands-on opportunities to work in U.S. organizations, and in return the PDE host organizations broaden their knowledge of African cultures and ways of thinking and working.

The Fellowship facilitates positive relationships between Fellows from different African nations. Fellows form deep and lasting relationships during the intensive six weeks in the United States, which continue after their return home. Alumni attend conferences together and share funding opportunities, work-related advice and invitations to speak and teach, and friendship.

Finally, the Reciprocal Exchange component builds positive relationships between U.S. professionals and Fellows. The Reciprocal Exchange was designed as an innovative way to support Fellows with special projects and develop new ways of thinking about their businesses, products, and teaching. Although the Reciprocal Exchange is only a small part of the Fellowship, its impact has been significant.

### EQ6 Key Findings

The Fellowship and post-return engagement contribute to USG foreign policy goals in a number of ways. Skills Fellows learn at the Institutes and their observations of American governance in a democratic society make strong impressions, which they carry back to their home countries and apply in their workplaces. The lessons Fellows take back to their countries include developing a better understanding of what democracy means, becoming better citizens, realizing their voices count, noticing the gap in civic education in their home countries, becoming involved in elections, and even voting for the first time.

These skills and lessons influence their management style, approach to challenges, and – to some extent – the economic impacts they have on their communities. As a result of the Fellowship, Alumni have started new businesses and NGOs, hired more staff, brought on apprentices or developed new strategies for community or professional work. Many of those who received grants used the funds to train and employ more people. U.S. participants in the Fellowship have also gained professional benefits they have incorporated into their careers, such as focusing their research areas, expanding their global networks, and growing their business capabilities and offerings.

The Fellowship, Reciprocal Exchange, and PDE foster fruitful collaborations between the United States and Africa. Many Fellows continue to engage with the USG after the Fellowship, primarily through U.S. Embassies. Overall, the Fellowship and post-return engagement with Fellowship activities, networking, and funding opportunities build positive relationships and ties with the United States.

### EQ6 Conclusions

The Fellowship's U.S. exchange program has contributed to the U.S. foreign policy goals of strengthening democratic institutions and governance, spurring economic growth and prosperity, and strengthening ties between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. An

important aspect of Fellows' learning is witnessing democratic models and processes in the United States, sometimes in contrast to governing styles in their home countries. Further, leadership skills gained during the Fellowship can support Alumni to further apply democracy and good governance principles in their own countries. These skills can enable Alumni to activate previously excluded groups, encourage adoption of democratic rules and practices, organize citizens to insist their governments serve them and are accountable, and secure policy changes.

Finally, the collective Fellowship experiences strengthened U.S.-Africa collaboration and relationships. Fellows used their newfound networking, proposal writing, and communications skills to apply for funding from the USG and other sources. Ongoing U.S.-Africa collaboration and communications through funding opportunities has helped strengthen ties and relationships between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa nations. Many relationships are ongoing, and some have had a multiplier effect. U.S. Embassies continue to play an important role in forging ties among the Fellows, their networks, and their communities and the United States.

### EQ7 Key Findings

The Fellowship has yielded substantial benefits to Fellows and the African and United States communities of which they engaged during and after their time in the United States. The Fellows found the Institutes most beneficial to their growth. Fellows experienced challenges with, or suggested improvements to pre-departure orientation, expectations about program components, the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange selection process, the Summit, and post-program debriefs.

Staff from U.S. Embassies and Consulates noted they experienced challenges around Fellow recruitment and representation, such as applicant credentials and geographic distribution of candidates across regions, provinces, rural areas, etc. They also noted the prestige that comes with being a Mandela Washington Fellow resulted in challenges with some Fellows having feelings of primacy compared to other State Department Alumni upon return to home countries. The Fellowship selects highly motivated Fellows who are eager to give back to their communities and peers upon return. While the feelings of primacy were not true for the majority of Fellows, Embassies noted it was a recurring trend. Finally, demand for and interest in USG funding grows with the Alumni pool, beyond what DOS can support.

### EQ7 Conclusions

There may be value in updating and clarifying the program scope for stakeholders. Common themes from Fellows and U.S. Embassies included the need to manage expectations, enforce certain program objectives, and revisit the selection strategy.

Additionally, improvements could be made to the Washington, DC Summit. Key Findings indicate that some Fellows found the Washington, DC Summit to be overwhelming, while others found great value in the networking opportunities. There may be value in revisiting the

content and structure of the event to address the needs and interests of the Fellows as expressed in the feedback surveys administered to Fellows each year.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the various tiers of participation associated with the Fellowship program – including those who apply to the Fellowship program and those who are selected to participate in the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange – impacted the Fellow experience. There is a need for more clarity around the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange criteria, and training on the application processes. There also may be value in considering alternative PDE or Reciprocal Exchange models that would allow these opportunities to be available to more Fellows.

## Recommendations

### Fellow Selection and Pre-Departure

- **Embassies, Institutes, ECA Implementing Partner, and ECA can consider collaborating more closely to better manage Fellows' expectations prior to departure for the Fellowship and soon after arrival.** This includes updating pre-departure orientation curriculum, developing standardized pre-departure guidance on program expectations, sharing Fellow profiles with Institutes earlier each year, and creating a toolkit to include examples or templates with guidance to Institutes on tailoring curriculum.
- **Embassies can consider strengthening connection among Fellows from the same country before their departure.** Currently Fellows from a particular country spend a half day together in pre-departure orientation, but additional opportunities for networking prior to pre-departure orientation can support greater connection amongst country peers.
- **Institutes, ECA Implementing Partner, and ECA can consider increasing and standardizing preparatory information for non-Institute U.S. participants (e.g., guest lecturers, community service organizations).** This could include providing community members with Fellowship fact sheets, hosting an annual nationwide conference call for the Fellowship's community participants, and standardizing information shared with U.S. communities.

### U.S. Exchange Components of Fellowship

- **ECA, ECA Implementing Partner, and Institutes can consider increasing program flexibility to allow for additional institute autonomy in program execution.** This includes offering multiple community service options, incorporating community service into Institute curriculum, and reducing the number of required hours for program components to offer additional time for networking, community engagement, and hands-on experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> The Evaluation Team recognizes that changes are continuously made to the Summit (as well as other aspects of the program) to respond to Fellow and other stakeholder feedback. This report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations reflect feedback from Fellows across the 2014 – 2018 cohorts. Therefore, the respondents are providing feedback from their personal experience with key Fellowship components, such as Institutes and the Washington, DC Summit.



## Washington DC Summit

- **ECA Implementing Partner and ECA can consider additional innovations to the Summit structure and format.** This could include creating a more manageable environment for some Fellows by scaling down the number of required sessions, allowing additional time for reflection, and building in additional open/free time before or after the Summit for cultural experiences and visits to historic sites in Washington, DC.

## Post-Fellowship Return

- **Embassies should continue to play a key role in post-Fellowship activities, in conjunction with ECA and ECA Implementing Partner.** Embassies' central role in Fellows' return home can be bolstered by developing recommended Embassy events and engagements to support structured engagement with Fellows, guiding Fellows on how to engage with embassies, making post-Fellowship debriefs standard (even if it requires debriefing twice), and considering alternative funding support to Public Management Fellows.
- **ECA Implementing Partner, Institutes, and ECA should consider standardizing post-Fellowship connections with Fellows.** This standardization could include sharing a Fellowship Alumni listserv with Institutes, creating a U.S. stakeholder database for Fellows (allowing U.S. stakeholders to opt in/out), and gathering best practices from Institutes with current Fellow networks and databases.

## Professional Development Experience

- **ECA Implementing Partner and ECA can consider modifying the PDE experience and expanding it if resources allow.** These modifications could include extending the PDE experience into a virtual experience and adding more Fellows to the PDE component each year subject to funding.
- **ECA Implementing Partner can consider providing manager parameters to PDE hosts.** Optimal managers would further support Fellows' PDE experience. Manager parameters could include additional guidance in PDE Host instructions/communications on selecting managers that understand PDE objectives, can help place the Fellow, and will advocate for their training.

## Reciprocal Exchange

- **ECA and Embassies can consider expanding participation in this successful component.** This expansion could include an increased number of Reciprocal Exchange projects, and providing Reciprocal Exchange Awardees with additional support (e.g., logistics checklists and facilitated connections with the US embassies), recognizing there may be financial and human resource constraints to any expansion.

## Overall Program

- **ECA, ECA Implementing Partner, and Institutes can consider exploring methods for expanding Fellow connections within the United States.** Expanding connections could include exploring avenues to connect Fellows with Diaspora communities, supporting community activities, providing material and resource assistance in emergencies, and reaching out to National Resource Centers for Africa to identify synergies.

# EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is a signature effort of the USG. The program's purpose is to invest in the next generation of African leaders. Launched in 2010, YALI was designed to support young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Sub-Saharan Africa. The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, the YALI Network, and the YALI Regional Leadership Centers (RLC) are the three components of YALI. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of YALI that empowers emerging leaders through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking.

The evaluation's purpose was to examine the degree to which the U.S.-based components of the Mandela Washington Fellowship are meeting the program's stated goals and the impact on advancing Department of State (DOS) strategic policy priorities. More specifically, the evaluation offers an analysis of how Fellowship Alumni operationalize skills and knowledge learned during their U.S. exchange experience to advance their career goals, impact communities, and build lasting and productive relationships between people of the United States and Africa.

The evaluation reviews the first five years of the Fellowship (2014 – 2018).<sup>4</sup> As the Fellowship continues, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation can support improvements to the program moving forward.<sup>5</sup> The findings will provide critical information to assist DOS, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the U.S. Congress, and others to make evidence-based decisions for future program planning and design, budget, and policy issues.

The ECA Evaluation Division engaged Guidehouse to conduct the evaluation, referred to hereafter as “the Evaluation Team.”

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Fellows, ages 25 to 35, are selected from countries across Sub-Saharan Africa through a competitive application process. The Fellows have established records of accomplishment in promoting innovation and positive impact in their organizations, institutions, communities, and countries. Selection officials consider diversity in the selection process to achieve gender balance and to be inclusive of persons with disabilities. Upon selection, the Fellows travel to the United States for a six-week program at Academic and Leadership Institutes (“Institutes”) across the country at U.S. colleges/ universities. In the 2014 – 2018 period, there were three types of Fellowship program tracks: Public Management, Business & Entrepreneurship, and Civic Leadership. There was also a specialized Energy Institute in 2016 and 2017. There are

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<sup>4</sup> Therefore, changes and/or updates to the Fellowship in 2019 are outside the scope of this evaluation.

<sup>5</sup> The Evaluation Team recognizes that changes are continuously made to the Summit (as well as other aspects of the program) to respond to Fellow and other stakeholder feedback. This reports findings, conclusions, and recommendations reflect feedback from Fellows across the 2014 – 2018 cohorts. Therefore, the respondents are providing feedback from their personal experience with key Fellowship components, such as Institutes and the Washington, DC Summit.



25 Fellows in each Institute cohort. After completing programming at the Institute, all Fellows travel to Washington, DC to reconvene as a cohort in a Summit event. Fellows participate in lectures, lightning talks, training activities, and networking events during the Summit. Following the Summit, Fellows return home with the intention to implement the lessons learned from their Fellowship experience.

In addition to the Institutes and Summit, which all Fellows participate in, there are two additional components of the program. These include the Professional Development Experience (PDE) and the Reciprocal Exchange. The PDE is a short-term professional placement, after the six-week Institute, where 100 Fellows are selected prior to arriving in the United States. Fellows are placed at USG, private sector, or non-profit organizations that are in line with their professional goals or careers. The Reciprocal Exchange is an exchange program in which a U.S.-based individual applies to work on a specific project with a Fellow. The U.S.-based individual is the Reciprocal Exchange Awardee. While individual projects vary, the Reciprocal Exchange Awardee typically travels to the African continent to work on a project with the Fellow.

The number of Fellows has fluctuated throughout 2014 – 2018 (between 500 – 1,000 annually). There are approximately 3,700 Fellowship Alumni from 2014 – 2018. The program continues today, although the 2020 program year was postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the publication of this report, the Fellowship (including the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange) is managed by IREX, an ECA implementing partner.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Evaluation Questions (EQ) reviewed for this evaluation are provided below. They have been organized in five major categories designed to understand the holistic program impact and areas for change.

### Impact on Fellowship Alumni

1. What individual-level impact has the Mandela Washington Fellowship U.S. exchange had on its Alumni?
  - a. How has participation in the U.S. exchange contributed to Alumni:<sup>7</sup>
    - i. Professional development
    - ii. Personal and professional goals
  - b. How have Alumni leadership skills and/or opportunities (within their community, schools, and/or places of employment) changed as a result of participating in the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship
  - c. How has participation in the Reciprocal Exchange contributed to Alumni:
    - i. Professional development
    - ii. Personal and professional goals

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<sup>6</sup> The 2020 program did not occur due to covid-19 related travel and assembly restrictions.

<sup>7</sup> EQ 1a and 1c's sub-parts originally stated: "Professional Development" and "Business Success". However, upon discussions with stakeholders – including ECA – "business success" was deemed to be potentially confusing for Fellows. The concern was that the word "business" would be interpreted as an actual "business" rather than a generic way of understanding their success in the business field. Therefore, the questions were updated to read "professional development" and "personal and professional goals".

### **Impact on Communities**

2. In what ways has participation in the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?
3. In what ways has participation in the Reciprocal Exchange component of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?
4. In what ways does the Mandela Washington Fellowship benefit local American communities?

### **Supporting Public Diplomacy Goals**

5. To what extent has the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship built lasting and productive relationships, both personal and institutional, between the United States and other countries?
  - a. In what ways has the Mandela Washington Fellowship supported networking/engagement with the wider Exchange Alumni Network?
  - b. In what ways has the Mandela Washington Fellowship supported networking/engagement with other Mandela Washington Fellows across Sub-Saharan Africa?
  - c. In what ways do Fellowship Alumni continue to engage with people they met on their exchange program once they return home?
  - d. In what ways do Fellowship Alumni continue to engage and build a positive relationship with the U.S. government?

### **Supporting Foreign Policy Goals**

6. How does the Fellowship's U.S. exchange support the following foreign policy goals:
  - a. Strengthening democratic institutions and governance;
  - b. Spurring economic growth and prosperity in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., contributions to local economies, job skills, professional development – for U.S. and African participants); and,
  - c. Building stronger ties between Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States.

### **Process Improvement**

7. How can ECA shape the next phase of U.S.-based Mandela Washington Fellowship programming?
  - a. What aspects of the U.S. exchange did alumni find most and least useful/beneficial?
  - b. Which aspects of the U.S. exchange would they change?
  - c. Are there any program components that stakeholders – such as IREX, USAID, Regional Leadership Centers and relevant U.S. Embassy personnel think the Fellowship should change with its U.S. programming?<sup>8</sup>

## **EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS**

The evaluation focuses on the Mandela Washington Fellowship from 2014 – 2018. The evaluation reviews outcomes and impacts of the U.S.-Based Fellowship (e.g., Institutes at U.S. universities or colleges; the annual networking Summit; competitively selected PDEs;

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<sup>8</sup> EQ 7c originally asked what relevant stakeholders thought should be 'added' to the program. To reflect the diverse feedback received, the question has been broadened to what could be 'changed' in the program, which incorporates additions as well as other potential modifications suggested.

Reciprocal Exchange projects); and Africa-based support directly related to the Fellowship. While the other two components of the YALI program – YALI Network and RLCs – intersect with the Fellowship, they were not evaluated as part of this evaluation.

## TIMELINE AND TEAM COMPOSITION

This evaluation was conducted from October 2018 – August 2020. International data collection occurred from April – November 2019 (*online survey*: April – May 2019; *international site visits*: periodic visits from August – November 2019). Domestic data collection occurred from March – April 2020 (*online survey*: March – April 2020; *remote domestic site visits*: March – April 2020).

The evaluation team included: an evaluation team lead, an education specialist, business analysts, and key subject matter experts in areas such as evaluation/design, data analytics, and social media analysis.

## DESIGN AND METHODS

This section provides a high-level review of evaluation design and methods. For more details, please review **Annex III**. The evaluation team used a mixed methods approach to data collection, using quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather primary data. Primary data sources included online surveys (with quantitative and qualitative questions), stakeholder interviews (domestic and international), and review of the Fellowship’s social media penetration (known as social media research and analysis (SMRA)). ECA and IREX stakeholders were consulted to gather background, context, and goals/objectives information related to the Mandela Washington Fellowship. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, findings, conclusions, and recommendations were primarily drawn from the following stakeholder groups: Fellows (2014 – 2018 cohorts), African and U.S. community members, Institute staff, PDE hosts, and Reciprocal Exchange awardees. Primary data collection reviewed information from 2014 – 2018, while the SMRA covered the period from February 2018 – March 2020. Secondary data sources were included through document reviews (see **Annex VI** for a list of documents reviewed).

Data analysis was undertaken to answer the EQs, illustrate Alumni lessons learned, and draw linkages between the Fellowship program and outcomes. The evaluation team performed qualitative and quantitative data analysis, as described in **Table 1**.

*Table 1. Analysis Methods*

Type of Data	Analysis Method
<b>Quantitative</b>	Descriptive statistics, Likert Scale, and aggregated yes / no questions were used to examine trends across stakeholder groups.
<b>Qualitative</b>	Semi-structured qualitative data received were coded and categorized into themes to standardize responses objectively.

Additional information evaluation design, methods, analysis, and limitations can be found in **Annex III**.

## EVIDENCE, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings and conclusions are organized by the evaluation questions listed in the Introduction. Quotes from KII and survey respondents illustrate the findings and represent common themes that emerged during the evaluation. Key findings and conclusions are included in table format in **Annex II**.

Analysis of the evaluation findings from Alumni found few differences of opinion across program tracks. Notable differences are highlighted, such as those regarding job skills gained and the relevance of Institute and post-Fellowship programming to Fellows' context. Likewise, an initial analysis of responses by gender showed minor or no differences.

### EVALUATION QUESTION 1

*What individual-level impact has the Mandela Washington Fellowship U.S. exchange had on its Alumni?*

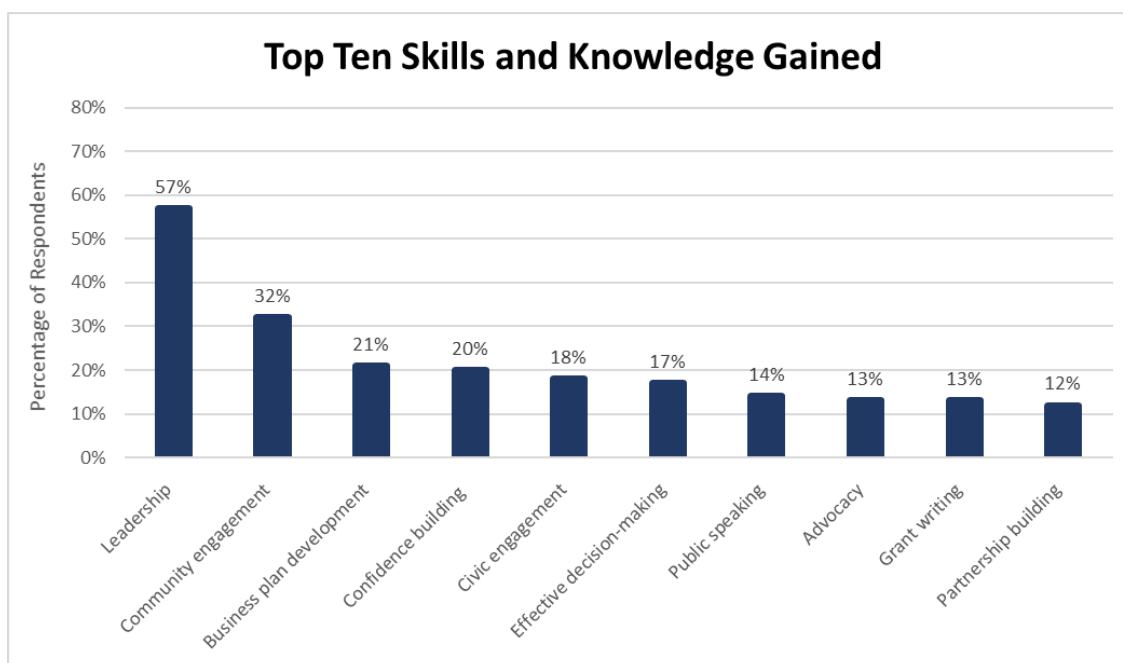
#### KEY FINDINGS

On an individual level, the Fellowship advanced Alumni's professional development and furthered personal and professional goals. Nearly universally, Alumni noted the significant contribution of leadership and community engagement skills to their professional development. The Fellowship hit the mark on contributing to individuals' personal and professional goals; helping them find new jobs and start new businesses or organizations, providing training on how to better manage businesses/organizations, and showing Fellows what types of training and education they needed to achieve success.

Likewise, Alumni unanimously felt the PDE helped them professionally, particularly in how they worked and networked with others in their field. For Alumni involved in either the PDE or Reciprocal Exchange, these experiences helped open doors to new work opportunities and partnerships.

#### EQ 1A) HOW HAS PARTICIPATION IN THE U.S. EXCHANGE CONTRIBUTED TO ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

**Figure 1** identifies the skills and types of knowledge the Alumni said they had gained from the Fellowship, the top five being: leadership (551 respondents), community engagement (307 respondents), business plan development (198 respondents), confidence building (191 respondents) and civic engagement (176 respondents).



*Figure 1. Skills and Knowledge Gained [Source: Fellowship Alumni Survey]*

When disaggregated, the following key skills and knowledge gained were identified by Fellowship track:

- Business & Entrepreneurship track: Business plan development and marketing skills
- Public Management track: Policy analysis
- Civic Leadership track: Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) management
- PDEs: Building businesses, managing time, working with people from different backgrounds, being sensitive to diversity in the workplace, making better decisions and managing programs.

Two percent of respondents stated that the Fellowship had not contributed to their professional development due to its narrow focus or the inability for the program to directly help them in their professional field. Only one percent said they did not know whether the Fellowship had contributed to their professional development.

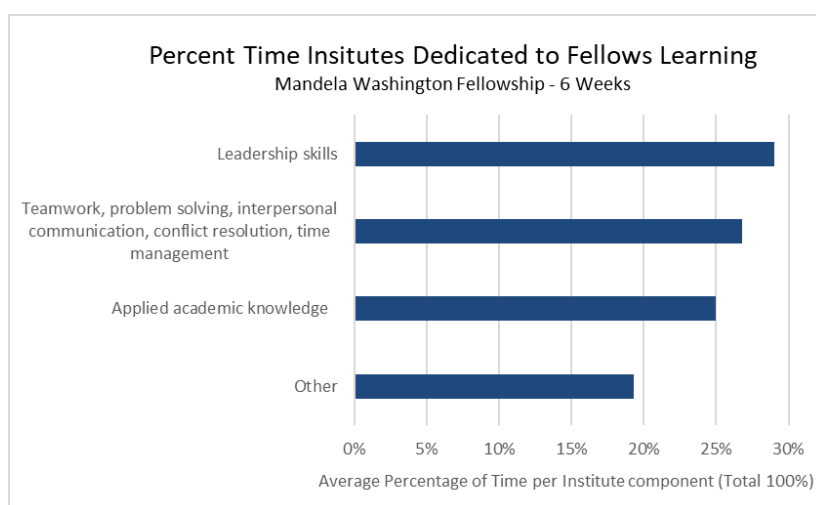
### **KF 1a.1. Hard and Soft Skills Were Both Important, and Applicable to the Fellows' Home Workplaces**

The Fellowship was designed to impart both academic knowledge and soft skills training, which are key components for adult learning. Best practice indicates that training in “soft skills” (leadership, teamwork, problem solving, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and time management) is as important, or more important than, training in theoretical knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The Fellowship appears to build on current leading practices for short-term fellowships, including: building in a variety of experiences in addition to academic training; changing learning perspective from the learner as an ‘empty vessel’ to the learner bringing their own experience and knowledge to the table; providing mentors; providing

<sup>9</sup> Based on adult education theory such as Malcolm Knowles' Five Principles of Andragogy.

multiple perspectives through site visits; taking careful pre-program preparation; and ensuring follow-up networking.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2** shows the percentage of time Fellows spent in each of these areas, including academic knowledge and soft skills. Other time spent was primarily on additional soft skills learning and experiences such as site visits, community service, networking events, cultural and community experiences. How the Institutes balanced and integrated this



*Figure 2. Fellows Learning at Institutes [Source: Academic and Leadership Institute Staff Survey]*

combination of learning activities proved invaluable to Fellows when they returned to home workplaces.

Fellows mentioned communications skills such as: public speaking, presenting, making an elevator pitch, developing advocacy strategies and writing reports – were most useful when they returned home. Improving their writing skills and learning effective decision making had helped a number of Fellows develop business plans, focus their work, become more strategic, and have more or improved confidence moving forward. African community members interviewed remarked that the Fellows are contributing more at work or in the community, are speaking up more, are less timid and more confident in their capacities and abilities. An African community member also noted that the [local] hierarchy / authority paid more attention to them.

*“You know, after the Fellowship, she was a completely different person. Her way of interaction professionally, socially, it completely changed ... After the program, she was really professional.” Community Member  
Cameroon*

A Kenyan Fellow said that he had gained a better grasp of policy analysis and that learning to analyze proposed legislation on youth issues by looking at regional trends had allowed him to build cases to be heard in the high court in Kenya. A Cameroonian Fellow said the Fellowship had strengthened her capacity in community and civic engagement, provided entry into a network of young women engaged in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Africa.

<sup>10</sup> Five Principles of Andragogy and International Training Programs

## EQ 1AII) HOW HAS PARTICIPATION IN THE U.S. EXCHANGE CONTRIBUTED TO ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GOALS?

Nearly universally (96 percent), Alumni stated that participation in the Fellowship helped them achieve their professional and personal goals. The Fellowship helped in the form of new job opportunities (24 percent), starting a business or organization (28 percent), using the new skills/knowledge to manage a business or organization or team (67 percent), and learning to determine the training and/or education needed to achieve success in their chosen profession (53 percent).<sup>11</sup> The top skills and knowledge learned through the Fellowship that contributed to goal achievement include leadership, how to engage with communities, working with more confidence, doing civic engagement, being a more effective decision-maker, and partnership building. Others (9 percent), said it helped better organize and clarify their goals, increase their network, and improve their confidence.

A few respondents added that the Fellowship had helped them achieve personal goals, including being courageous, learning more about a profession, improving a mentoring program, and training teachers. Some Fellows said they had realigned their values, and one felt he had become a new person.

*“[I] heard in a lecture, ‘What do you want to be remembered for after your life?’ I realized what was important and not to pursue just money or fame. My career changed drastically. [I’m] trying to help my family farm better.”*  
Public Management track, Cameroonian Fellow

### **KF 1a.2. PDE Fellows Obtained Professional Skills Transferable to Work in Africa**

The PDEs further contributed to Alumni professional and personal goals. Since 2014, Fellows who engaged in the PDE have gained professional experience in nearly 250 U.S. businesses, organizations or government agencies in 29 states and Washington, DC.<sup>12</sup> Gaining professional experience in the United States is a valuable component of the Fellowship that has benefitted Fellows and PDE Hosts alike. A few examples of PDE experiences reported by the Alumni in KIIs, include the NGO Mercy Corps, Microsoft, Voice of America, Atlas Corps, Seattle Department of Education, Gallaudet University Global Integrity, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Merakey Behavioral Health Services in Philadelphia.

Across all tracks, 97 percent of Alumni who participated in the PDE stated the PDE had helped them professionally. Of the 211 respondents, 91.4 percent felt the PDE had affected how they worked and what they did when they returned home, including networking with others in their fields and in their home countries, gaining confidence, and learning how to build their business plans and bring them to fruition at home. These results were echoed in the KIIs with Alumni.

A few Fellows said that the PDE represented their most important experience in the United States for their professional growth or that it had been the highlight of their time in the country. They said they learned advanced techniques certain offices used and thus were able

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<sup>11</sup> Fellows could select more than one answer; hence percentages sum greater than 100.

<sup>12</sup> Information from <https://www.mandelawashingtonfellowship.org/pde/>



to implement things they might never have been exposed to otherwise. A Cameroonian Fellow said,

*“The PDE [at the USDA] helped me harness my skill in business and entrepreneurship ... how to start and succeed in agriculture.”*

Fellows across most tracks agreed or strongly agreed that they developed job skills during the PDE that benefitted their home countries. The exceptions were Fellows in the pilot Energy-focused Institute. A small number of these respondents disagreed or were neutral as they were looking for more hands-on work that could be directly applicable to their careers.

Some Business & Entrepreneurship Fellows stated that their experience taught them how to develop and implement new business plans they may not otherwise have learned. One learned how to develop an innovation hub. A Zambian Fellow learned how to manage rural farming communities in his country, and a Civic Leadership track Fellow said that he applied the technical skills he learned to government accountability in Nigeria:

*“I learned the importance of data visualization and mining for policy making. I am currently working on setting up a Policy Map, a data visualization, about policies in Nigeria to hold government accountable.”*

The grant writing and fundraising skills Fellows learned in the PDE helped them raise funds for ongoing/new projects to improve lives and benefit communities. A Civic Leadership Fellow from Cameroon said,

*“During my PDE I was trained in effective communication skills, networking, grant writing and project implementation strategies. IRI ensured I achieved deliverables on each personal or professional goal, from developing a mock project to having presentations with at least 10 organizations, organizing an event at IRI with external partners and fellows on creating safe spaces for youth engagement in democratic processes, which stands [out] as my main focus and professional ambition. My mock project is currently being funded by NED, and I am able to implement a better organization[al] structure and market the organization’s vision better and build coalitions to achieve my professional goals.”*

Both Fellows who had been accepted into the competitive PDE and their host organizations said they benefited from discussing shared issues and challenges in their sectors, broadened their viewpoints, and helped position U.S. organizations for future international engagement. Fellows with PDE experience in health, mental health, and disabilities said that the practical knowledge they learned helped them improve lives, including their own (being a good listener, being kinder to co-workers, etc.).

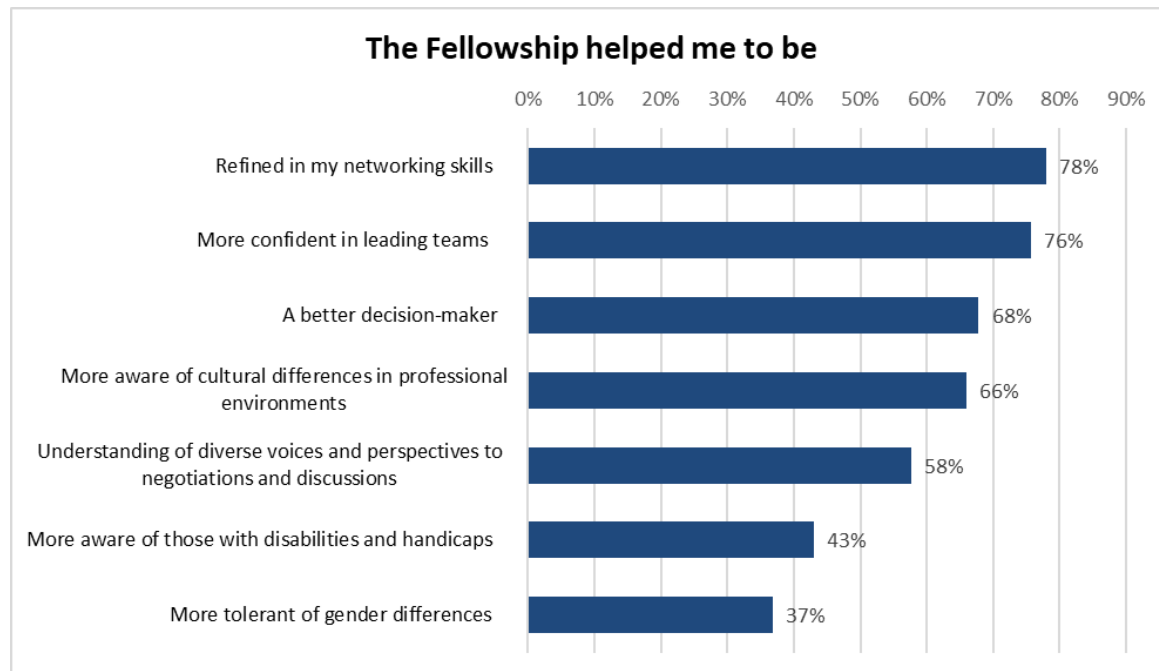


## EQ1B) HOW HAVE ALUMNI LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND/OR OPPORTUNITIES (WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY, SCHOOLS, AND/OR PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT) CHANGED AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE U.S. EXCHANGE PORTION OF THE FELLOWSHIP

### KF 1b.1. The Fellowship Helped Fellows Become Better Leaders and Broadened Their Knowledge of Culture and Diversity

The survey asked if Fellows became more effective leaders in their governments, organizations or business roles: 91 percent responded yes, 7 percent were uncertain, and 2 percent said no. The number of new companies Fellows created, new roles they assumed in their former or new workplaces or promotions, demonstrated evidence of the value of the Fellowship and training in leadership skills. Two-fifths (42 percent) said that participating in the Fellowship helped them gain new or better employment. One-quarter said they had become directors or managers.

The Fellowship aimed to develop leaders who would take their countries in new directions and lead their workplaces and communities. Fellows spent nearly one-third of their time at the Institutes learning leadership skills. The electronic survey and KIIs asked if and how the Fellowship had changed Fellows' leadership styles, if they had taken on new leadership positions in their workplaces or governments since the Fellowship, and if the Fellowship had helped them get new or better employment. Nearly all the 951 respondents (97 percent) said the Fellowship had helped them become better leaders. **Figure 3** shows how Fellows said how the Fellowship has changed their professional lives. They have become better at their professions, but also sensitive to people of different cultures and those with different viewpoints, as well as more supportive of gender egalitarianism.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 3. Leadership Skills [Fellowship Alumni Survey]*

Fellows commented that learning better writing and communication skills helped them become better coworkers and leaders of teams. Learning how to build teams and networks

<sup>13</sup> “More tolerant of gender differences” in Figure 3 refers to increased sensitivity and understanding of the equality among people of different genders.

helped the Fellows form partnerships, link to others across their disciplines, and define their target audiences. Other aspects of leadership that respondents mentioned learning were time management, team management, personal initiative, and interpersonal skills (patience, listening/letting others respond, tolerance, clarity of thought, self-confidence, the importance of behavior modification). In KIIs, many Fellows mentioned learning about “servant leadership” (putting the needs of employees and communities first and helping people perform as well as possible, as opposed to traditional autocratic or dictatorial leadership).<sup>14</sup>

*“The Fellowship taught me a whole understanding about leadership ... you are being the people’s voice. You’re there to represent the people, lead them, in case they are lost—you’re not imposing on them.” Civic Leadership track, Cameroonian Fellow*

*“Leadership is an action rather than a position. Trust in those you delegate, don’t do everything yourself.” Civic Leadership track, Kenyan Fellow*

Respondents also learned about values-based management, which focuses on better decision making at all levels of an organization and provided Fellows with an alternative to top-down and command-and-control structures. Alumni said that this training had taught them the importance of evaluating the competency of every component of an organization, listening to their teams, being sensitive to social and cultural differences and engaging with communities.

#### **KF. 1b.2 Alumni Gained New Opportunities as a Result of the Fellowship**

Fellows were asked if they had gained opportunities from participating in the Fellowship, from networking with Institute staff, and/or from other Fellows or PDE hosts. Many Fellows did have opportunities as a direct result of participating in the Fellowship. Because of new skills and in part, because of the Fellowship, there were more opportunities including increased job offers and/or promotions, higher paying work, internships, and offers to speak at events. Some opportunities came as a direct result of participating in the Fellowship, such as becoming involved with the YALI Regional Board; working with U.S. embassies; and, securing United States African Development Foundation (USADF) grants. A number had joined forces with other Fellows from their own or other countries, and sometimes from their Institute cohorts in the United States. Others mentioned joining committees with other Fellows, going on a joint book tour (two Kenyan Alumni), and jointly developing a reproductive health education application to improve health outcomes.

During KIIs, several Alumni noted that having the Fellowship experience on their CV served as a reputational signal of skill, expertise, and professionalism. Fellows found that while the Fellowship may not have directly led to a new job, speaking engagement, Fellowship, etc., it did open doors.

Additionally, there are new opportunities as a result of Alumni having larger networks. Fellows noted that their African networks and relationships dramatically increased as a result of the Fellowship, and maintaining contact with these networks increased knowledge of, and

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<sup>14</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf first popularized the phrase “servant leadership” in an essay “Servant as Leader”, 1970.

led to, new professional opportunities (e.g., sharing funding opportunities of interest via WhatsApp). Respondents also said contacts they made in the United States – with university staff, PDE hosts, host communities, people met at events and community service – had expanded and deepened their professional networks and generated opportunities for work, personal growth, and funding.

*“Networking is ‘the hottest’, and those relationships that are established and then flourished after. Aside from networking, which we try to pepper [it] through the weeks, every opportunity we have to connect our folks with people at Rutgers or in their industry, we try to make that a top priority. Those communications and relationships have been high on the value chart in terms of what Fellows walk away with.” Institute Staff, Rutgers*

## EQ1 CI, CII: HOW HAS PARTICIPATION IN THE RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE CONTRIBUTED TO ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT? PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL GOALS?

### KF 1c.1. The Reciprocal Exchange Opened Doors to New Work Opportunities and Partnerships, as well as Developing New Approaches to Work.

The Reciprocal Exchange is a programmatic component of the Fellowship added in 2015 and formalized in 2016. The Reciprocal Exchange supports American professionals ('Reciprocal Exchange Awardee') to collaborate with Fellows in sub-Saharan Africa on projects they design together. Participants include businesspeople, those in academia, industry experts and organizations. Through these projects, Americans and Fellows form partnerships, expand markets and networks and increase mutual understanding between the United States and Africa.<sup>15</sup>

Between 2016 and 2019, 172 Americans with diverse backgrounds and interests made connections with Fellows across a variety of sectors including, but not limited to: agriculture, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, financial management, human rights, disability issues, and health. They traveled to the Fellows' countries and implemented projects in country, or in some cases, in multiple countries.

Most Alumni (87 percent) who worked on Reciprocal Exchange projects with U.S. Awardees said that the project generated opportunities furthering their professional development, examples of which can be found in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Examples of Reciprocal Exchange Job Skills Employed

Job Skills Employed	Examples of Projects
<b>Development of new projects, business or products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing the first Innovation Summit (Chad)</li> <li>• Advancing deaf education in (Nigeria)</li> <li>• Expanding organic food production (Cameroon)</li> </ul>
<b>Furthering capacities and new training tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education (Nigeria)</li> <li>• Training young professionals to become more competitive in their fields (Togo)</li> <li>• Assessing training needs to revamp curriculum and strategic development (Kenya)</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> Information abstracted from Reciprocal Exchange One pager -2017 Department of State materials

Job Skills Employed	Examples of Projects
<b>Better management and mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement and business coaching, networking and leadership (Malawi)</li> <li>• Community engagement and coaching (Kenya)</li> <li>• Working with an expert in the field (South Africa)</li> </ul>
<b>Augmented use of communications, networking and partnering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with senior colleagues and expanding academic networks (Nigeria)</li> <li>• Micro-budget filmmaking and networking (Equatorial Guinea)</li> <li>• Partnering with American University (DRC)</li> </ul>

New approaches to work gained through the Reciprocal Exchange brought financial, educational, and business benefits. Fellows mentioned that they had learned to create new products, teach STEM courses, and manage projects.

*“As I have great interest in community development, I am proud to acknowledge the Reciprocal Exchange contributed to my personal goals by the introduction of an innovation which has the propensity to enhance fruit preservation and increase efforts toward youth empowerment for community development” Civic Leadership track, Liberian Fellow*

Less tangible skills Fellows said they learned included focusing better and being a more understanding boss. A few Fellows interviewed felt that the Reciprocal Exchange had not opened new doors for them said that the Awardee had not visited or was interested in a different sector. When the American Reciprocal Exchange Awardee was asked about what they would change, nearly a third said they would not change anything. Some Reciprocal Exchange Awardees said they would have liked more support materials or changed pre-departure processes so they were less rushed, had more travel assistance or had more flexible travel dates.

## CONCLUSIONS

Participating in the Fellowship, the PDE, and/or the Reciprocal Exchange contributed to Fellows’ professional development and improved their leadership skills and opportunities.

### **C1.1. Leadership Skills Were Critical for Fellows’ Success in Their Home Countries**

Leadership skills ranked highest in importance among all Alumni surveyed and were among the most appreciated skills and perhaps the most applicable after the Fellowship. Strengthening the Fellows’ leadership was a key objective of the Fellowship, achieved through the Institute training and activities during the U.S. exchange. Better leadership skills helped Alumni achieve new jobs, higher-level positions, more strategic projects, and management of teams or co-workers when they returned to their countries.

### **C1.2. Participation in the Fellowship Helped Fellows Achieve Professional and Personal Goals**

All surveys found that the Fellowship, PDEs, and Reciprocal Exchanges had net positive individual impacts on the Fellows. Few respondents had failed to learn skills or meet their professional and personal goals. Learning academic knowledge and ‘soft skills’ both held importance in developing African leaders, and both were valued by the Fellows. Larger networks supported professional and personal goals. Most of the skills the Fellows learned in the U.S. exchange or PDEs were applicable in their home countries and improved their work.

### C1.3 The PDE and Reciprocal Exchange Components of the Fellowship Built Workplace Expertise and Relationships

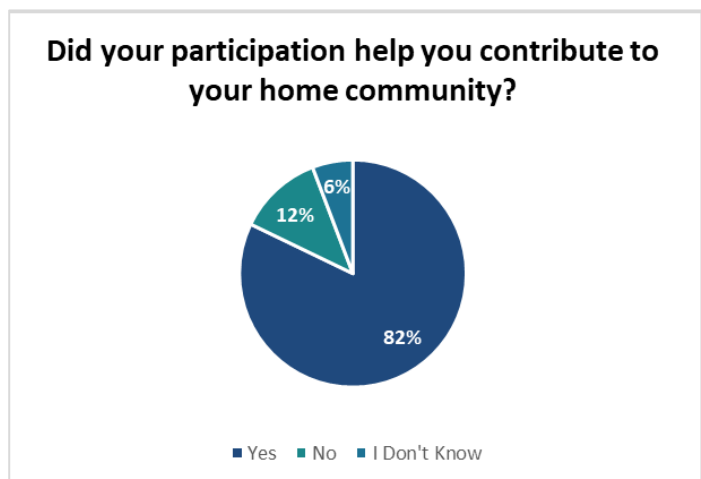
Most PDEs were well-matched to the Fellows' needs. Where this pairing most closely addressed the Fellows' professional and personal needs, it could be life changing. A number of Fellows were promoted, got speaking engagements or found funding for their projects or organizations. Community members remarked on changes in the Fellows' confidence, leadership, and courage to speak up. While the Reciprocal Exchange was a small component of the Fellowship and involved less time in the Fellows' countries, it had a significant impact on both the Fellows and their communities and organizations. Fellows learned new ways to implement projects, use technologies and think differently or teach. The skills the Fellows learned may help the relationships built between the United States and Africa achieve the longer-term impact intended.

## EVALUATION QUESTION 2

*In what ways has participation in the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?*

### KEY FINDINGS

The content and structure of the Mandela Washington Fellowship program were created to support Fellows returning home to serve as leaders in their communities. Data collected demonstrate that the skills, training, and access to resources provided through the program strengthened the Fellows' capacity to be of service (see **Figure 4**). The experience also inspired new ideas for how they could serve and exposed them to the model of community service.



*Figure 4. Fellow Contribution to Home Community [Fellowship Alumni Survey]*

### KF 2.1: Fellows Leveraged Program Connections to Serve Communities

One of the most common ways Fellows served their local communities was through leveraging connections to the people and/or resources that were made available to them through the YALI program. The Fellowship and broader YALI program connected Fellows with capable and motivated cohort members, with whom they could collaborate and/or volunteer. Fellowship Alumni came together on a variety of service projects including:

- An advocacy movement against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in healthcare settings in Ethiopia
- Community events on gender equality in the Republic of Congo
- A financial literacy comic book for children in Zimbabwe
- Youth interfaith dialogue to encourage diversity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence in Cameroon
- An academy based on the Fellowship experience that incorporates teachings on community engagement and has led to several local community projects in Nigeria

- A Community Service Day, where young people volunteer in community projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In addition to launching new initiatives together, several Fellows also indicated that they had volunteered for each other's local NGOs or classrooms.

Fellows benefited from connections made with professional contacts whom they met during their time in the United States. One Fellow from Côte d'Ivoire partnered with his Institute and the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan to create a Design Thinking Academy in his community to strengthen local entrepreneurship, based on the content he learned at his Institute. Another Fellow from Gabon emphasized how his PDE at Microsoft introduced him to collaborators who helped him improve his business model and give back to his community. He explained,

*"I managed to convince Microsoft to help us improve education in Africa, starting with Gabon. It also helped me to build new partnerships to empower youth and help them to develop the skills to find a job or two start a business."* Business & Entrepreneurship track, Gabonese Fellow

Other types of connections established through the program that ultimately benefited local communities included contacts established during networking sessions and Reciprocal Exchange partnerships.

Another resource that made it easier for Fellows to serve their local communities was the funding opportunities made possible through their local U.S. Embassy and other partners such as USAID and USADF. While it is unclear how these opportunities varied by country, some Fellows indicated having access to certain funds like collaboration grants to support work they did in partnership with other Fellows, or a competitive programming grant managed by the local Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni Network. Fellows used these funds to scale up local activities and/or create opportunities to train community members in new ways. A Fellow from the Democratic Republic of Congo highlighted how he used funding from the U.S. Embassy to host Civic Leadership and Entrepreneurship Camps at three of the largest universities in Kinshasa. The event was such a success that it was covered by several local media outlets, and the Fellow received invitations to host his program at five additional locations around the country.

Fellows were also able to access opportunities and community event guidance made available through the YALI Network, such as YALI Forums held locally, YALI Learn events, and free YALI online courses. These resources provided support for Fellows interested in engaging their local communities. A Fellow from Togo noted that he had organized a YALI Forum in Lomé that over 100 participants attended, and he is currently planning to hold a second event upcountry. Another Fellow from Sierra Leone explained,

*"My weekly YALI Learns events have given rural youths who have little or no access to internet the opportunity [to] study YALI courses and earn certificates. These youths are using the knowledge and skills gained to contribute to the development of their various communities."* Business & Entrepreneurship track, Sierra Leonean Alum



Another such platform that was recently launched by the U.S. Embassy in Cameroon is the *YALI Talk* series, which invites Fellows and other members of the YALI network to share ideas on a particular topic. The American Spaces program is another resource that provides free event space for local activities which can otherwise be expensive in many large cities.<sup>16</sup> Some Embassies use the American Corner (a type of American Space) to provide grants to host programs, events, or speaker series, as a way to reach the community. These platforms provided models for Alumni to serve their communities without needing to plan event logistics or find funding.

## **KF 2.2: Fellows Developed Tangible Skills That They Used to Help their Communities**

Through their Fellowship experience, Fellows developed new skills that they used to benefit their local communities to more effectively address community challenges and support local solutions. **Table 3** summarizes those skills highlighted by Fellows they developed that had the biggest impact on their community when returning home.

*Table 3. Skill Gained During Fellowship*

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Leadership skills</b>	The programs' leadership focus better equipped Fellows to lead and serve.	A Fellow from Côte d'Ivoire shared that the program strengthened her leadership skills and her ability to listen to others in her community and address their needs.
<b>Community engagement models</b>	New approaches to community engagement allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities in new ways.	A Fellow in the Democratic Republic of Congo was inspired to give soya meal from his production of soybean oil to community members to use to feed their animals.
<b>Design thinking</b>	Fellows used these skills to generate ideas and respond to local challenges.	A Fellow from South Africa used her design thinking skills with young entrepreneurs to help them strategize how to grow their businesses.
<b>Grant writing</b>	Fellows applied these skills to seek and secure funding for their ideas that ultimately benefited local communities.	A Fellow from Zambia used the grant writing skills he developed through the program to secure funding for his initiatives through the EU and the International Finance Corporations (IFC).
<b>Networking</b>	Networking skills enabled Fellows to establish new partnerships that benefited local communities.	A Fellow in Ghana used his networking skills to collaborate with a Peace Corps volunteer to drill a mechanized borehole at the health center where he worked.

There was a recurring theme of Fellows eager to share the skills they had learned with members of their home communities. Some Fellows were so motivated to promote knowledge sharing that they established training academies or internship programs based on the skills they learned through the Fellowship. This eagerness to share the skills they learned with others created a multiplier effect in home communities, with beneficiaries including young entrepreneurs, women learning vocational training skills, and smallholder farmers who received support ranging from business plan development to technical skills training.

<sup>16</sup> American Spaces are open-access cultural centers supported by the U.S. government. These centers are open in over 140 countries. More information can be found here: <https://eca.state.gov/programs-and-initiatives/initiatives/office-american-spaces>

### **KF 2.3: Fellows were Inspired to Contribute in New Ways**

The experience was life changing for many Fellows. Fellows had more confidence in their abilities and came to see themselves as community leaders. One Fellow explained,

*“After discovering my role as a leader in my community I took it upon myself to train my community on amaranth growing—a crop that is drought resistant and more nutritious than what the community has been growing over the years.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Kenyan Fellow*

Another Fellow from Côte d’Ivoire indicated that as a result of the Fellowship, he was now better able to identify and connect people with opportunities, while a Fellow from Nigeria shared how the program gave her the confidence to now run after-school math programs. This increase in confidence was noted by several African community Members when asked about how Fellows had changed upon returning home post-Fellowship. A Community Member in South Africa explained,

*“[She] became more confident... I didn’t feel the need to check in on her... she was able to sweep the small stuff and deal with complicated stuff... she had the maturity to deal with matters and when a complicated matter came she pushed through it instead of avoiding it. It was quite nice to see the groundedness...”*

Other Fellows noted that their experience gave them new motivation to seek out community leadership roles through neighborhood associations or boards of local nonprofits. Many Fellows began to see themselves as channels through which doors could open for others in their communities. This awareness of their ability to bring change led them to take actions that directly benefitted local community members. One Fellow from Madagascar emphasized that the Fellowship inspired her to engage more in mentoring especially for young leaders and give them advice on how to start a business or nonprofit.

Another Fellow from Nigeria was inspired by the Fellowship to become a greater servant leader and worked to ensure that basic health information was shared with vulnerable populations in her community that faced barriers in accessing healthcare. She made health education videos in her local language that were posted on local media and social media platform, to change people’s perceptions and improve their health practices.

Several Fellows indicated that they saw opportunities to make contributions in new places, to reexamine local challenges, and see new opportunities to serve. Sometimes this resulted in Fellows coming up with new solutions. As one Fellow from Cameroon explained,

*“Participating in the Fellowship gave me exposure... I saw a solution to a problem which we are facing in my community, upon my return, I immediately designed a project to address the problem in my community. Thanks to the Fellowship which exposed me to the solution.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Cameroonian Fellow*



In other cases, the experience led Fellows to consider focusing on particular stakeholder groups that they may have not worked with before. Numerous Fellows reported new or increased efforts to support youth in their communities through mentorship and/or skills training in math, foreign languages or civic engagement. Many shared their experience of the Fellowship with young people and mentored those interested in applying to international fellowship programs. Others indicated a specific focus on women, ranging from school age girls whom they tutored or adults who they counseled on topics such as entrepreneurship, agriculture, or health. A few Fellows noted that the U.S. exchange inspired them to better support community members with disabilities, reflecting efforts by the Fellowship to foster an inclusive and diverse environment. As one Fellow from Kenya explained,

*“I am now more aware of the challenges faced by the deaf community and I am pursuing sign language and hoping to partner with other fellows to build a robust program to help those who are deaf and hard of hearing.” –  
Civic Leadership track, Kenyan Fellow*

A Fellow from Ghana noted that Fellowship changed her perspective on where she should live and work. She said that it taught her the importance of contributing to the development of the community where they are and working to transform the lives of the people. This motivated her to stay and work in the Upper East Region, one of the poorest parts of Ghana, where she has focused on women’s empowerment and ending child marriage. She noted the program has been effective and that more women have been rescued from early marriage and encouraged to pursue academic goals. One of the most innovative examples in the data came from a Fellow from Uganda who is completing her PhD work in Belgium. With the knowledge and skills she developed through the Fellowship, she used her networking skills to create partnerships for social entrepreneurship ventures between communities in Uganda and Belgian sponsors.

Fellows had a positive influence on those around them just by modeling new behaviors. A Fellow in Cameroon who had previously been focused on specific sector of livestock production became interested in other sources of production and agriculture. She encouraged some peers to join her in establishing a cooperative focused on livestock and farming production. One cooperative member shared that she learned the spirit of initiating change from the Fellow.

A different Community Member from Cameroon noted the significant difference he and his colleagues saw in the Fellow they work with. The coworker explained that top management at their organization noticed many differences in the Alumnus upon his return. He began arriving to work at 8 am every day and would take a more interdisciplinary approach when sharing his perspective. He soon was promoted to a regional delegate position with much more responsibility to bring people together to implement activities.

#### **KF 2.4: Fellows Learned and Embraced Community Service**

Many Fellows reported that their first exposure to the concept of community service came through the activities organized by their Institutes. They reported finding volunteerism quite novel and unlike anything they had participated in in their home countries. Through these activities Fellows learned the importance of giving back to their communities, and many embraced this approach and continued these efforts when they returned home. Community

service provided Fellows with an opportunity to apply their leadership skills to promote a culture of volunteering, especially among young people, with Fellowship Alumni serving as mentors to convene and guide others. This is consistent with other findings that suggest Fellows were eager to share the skills and practices they learned during their Fellowship with their home communities and transfer the knowledge gained so that others could benefit. Embassy staff in Kenya explained that part of the appeal of community service is the ability to get things done, especially for those in government. They explained,

*“Many in government can get a mission to go on [the Fellowship] and the issue is coming back and being in a bureaucracy where they can’t push big ideas, so some try to do other things outside in their community.”*

With the knowledge they gained on how to organize community activities, Fellows implemented a wide variety of community service projects in their home communities. Many focused on neighborhood improvement activities such as community clean-up days to support solid waste management and drainage, tree planting, and/or public works projects such as road paving or bridge construction. Some Fellows launched activities in areas where they had specific technical expertise like hosting free trainings for youth or women’s groups, providing information sessions on public health campaigns or providing vocational training. A couple of Fellows explained that following the Fellowship they participated in community service by taking on leadership roles in community associations. For those who organized activities, the frequency of these events varied from one-time activities to those that occurred on a regular basis. Community service provided a vehicle for Fellows to give back to their communities and further hone their leadership skills. In promoting a culture of volunteerism, they are empowering community members, and young people in particular, to contribute as change agents in improving the lives of those around them.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **C 2.1: One of the Most Valuable Contributions of the Fellowship was Increased Confidence**

A clear theme underlying many of the Fellows’ responses was that the experience increased their confidence as leaders and in their abilities to address challenges and achieve their goals. The U.S. exchange and resources provided Fellows the support they needed to look for opportunities to serve as agents for positive change. The Fellowship provided them with new skills to improve their business plans or apply for grant funding. The cohort was also valuable in this regard, as Fellows gained a network of like-minded peers who could support them as they share and test out new ideas. Professional risks that might have otherwise seemed daunting became more feasible when surrounded by others who were also being proactive and taking risks.

Upon completing the U.S. exchange, Fellows saw themselves differently: an elite cohort of young Africans selected by the USG for their ability to be future leaders. Many Fellows returned home seeing themselves as more capable problem-solvers and viewing challenges as opportunities. Some created events for community members in areas where they had technical expertise, such as health campaigns, civic engagement or social issues. Others saw new opportunities to serve as mentors, farmers, entrepreneurs, or artisans. The majority of Fellows who pursued opportunities to mentor others focused on youth in their communities, sharing their Fellowship experience. Some engaged more with their communities by

volunteering with local NGOs or contributing their leadership skills to various types of neighborhood associations. Program connections and resources, such as events organized by other Fellows, events organized by the U.S. Embassy, and existing platforms for hosting local events, provided opportunities for Fellows to get more involved.

## **C 2.2: Community Service Represents a Significant Pathway Through Which Fellowship Alumni Give Back to Their Home Communities**

At many Institutes, community service was structured to be a supplemental activity that Fellows had the opportunity to engage in once or twice. Still, these experiences had profound effects on the Fellows, as many of them were unfamiliar with the concept of community service and were not accustomed to it in their home countries. While some struggled to understand the value of participating in volunteer activities that were not aligned with their professional goals, many others greatly appreciated the opportunity to engage more deeply with U.S. communities and reported that this model of voluntary service was something they were eager to take back and replicate in their home countries.

As Fellows reported on ways that they gave back to their communities, the Fellowship community service component stood out as a game changing aspect of their U.S. exchange experience. Fellows could organize one-day events or volunteer in ongoing efforts to bring community members together and make improvements. Community clean up days were especially popular: they were an easy way to engage and inspire local youth and make a positive contribution with limited time commitment, while also forging stronger connections between community members. While most Fellows were selected for their potential to serve their communities, it was through community service that many of them learned to broaden their understanding of service beyond their professional roles or their technical skillset. While the community service component was only a small aspect of the Fellowship program, it represented a significant pathway through which Fellows gave back to their home communities.

## **EVALUATION QUESTION 3**

*In what ways has participation in the Reciprocal Exchange component of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### **KF. 3.1 Reciprocal Exchange Projects Had Both Short- and Long-Term Impacts in Fellows' Home Communities**

Fellows were asked how their participation in the Reciprocal Exchange enabled them to benefit their home communities.<sup>17</sup> One-third (33 percent) said they had been able to build local capacity in their home communities. They mentioned initiatives that benefited their communities and beyond: youth empowerment, the use of innovative technologies, knowledge exchange, empowerment of women, community building through collaborative efforts, and education on nutrition and mental health. A few mentioned receiving additional grants (beyond those of the Reciprocal Exchange itself). Only a small number said the Reciprocal Exchange had not benefited their home communities or that they could not implement what they wanted yet (1 year after completing their project).

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<sup>17</sup> Home communities were defined as the communities in which the Fellows were currently living in Africa.

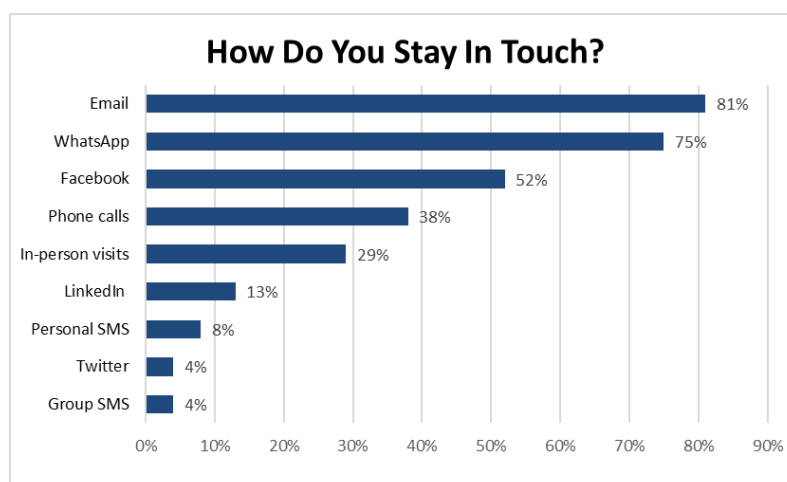
Alumni felt the Reciprocal Exchange helped deepen relationships with the Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Fellows and often broadened relationships with other universities and/or organizations in both the United States and in African countries. Some short- and long-term benefits mentioned in interviews by the Fellows included: capacity building/training and awareness raising, empowering girls and youth, helping the disabled, supporting income generation, promoting health, and protecting human rights.

Other impacts on African communities included: promoting engagement with the U.S private sectors, increasing knowledge or skills of the Fellow, their organization or community; bringing a new technology, or provision of technical or project support assistance. Measuring impacts in concrete terms posed challenges. While Reciprocal Exchange projects typically required measurable goals, respondents rarely mentioned this, possibly because timebound and ongoing projects posed measurement challenges. Two Fellows mentioned that their projects were poorly suited to the Reciprocal Exchange evaluation requirement.

A couple of examples where there was broad impact and received media coverage were in Zimbabwe and South Africa. One Reciprocal Exchange Awardee said that long-term support and funding by Stanford University of a Fellow's NGO, the Amagugu Heritage Trust, had encouraged tourism in Zimbabwe. The Reciprocal Exchange Awardee had met with more than 50 Fellows and appeared on radio and television to promote the trust. A Presidential Precinct Reciprocal Exchange Awardee had helped build awareness of environmental and housing issues in schools in South Africa with the Miss Earth program. The Precinct had contributed funding to highlight the Fellow's work with homeless families living in abandoned hospitals and with politicians to encourage developers to make affordable housing. The project had also worked with the Ford Foundation to scale up its efforts.

Reciprocal Exchange projects also had an effect (though less significant) on Reciprocal Exchange Awardees' home communities. In surveys and KIIs, Reciprocal Exchange Awardees were asked how they felt their projects had changed communities in the project countries and their own American communities. Of those Reciprocal Exchange Awardees who responded to the survey: one fifth of respondents said they had made changes in their home communities and organizations, 28 percent said they had made changes in their home communities, another 28 percent said that they had made changes in their organizations, 13 percent said they did not know, and 13 percent said the project had made no changes.

One way in which Reciprocal Exchanges had an effect on U.S. communities was through the creation of relationships. Universally, Reciprocal Exchange Awardees felt the exchange had built lasting and productive relationships with individuals and organizations. This theme was echoed across the different stakeholder groups (Institute Partners, U.S. host community members, PDE hosts, Fellowship Alumni) in the United States and Africa. Reciprocal Exchange Awardees keep in touch with Fellows through various means as shown in the **Figure 5**. Sixty-three percent were in touch with the Fellows at least once a month. WhatsApp and Email are the most frequent means of contact.



*Figure 5. How Reciprocal Exchange Awardees Stay in Touch with Fellows*  
[Source: Reciprocal Exchange Alumni Survey]

### **KF 3.2: Reciprocal Exchange Projects Improved Skills and the Lives of Targeted Groups**

Fellowship Alumni along with Reciprocal Exchange Awardees worked together to address important needs in African communities. Alumni drew upon the skills and training they garnered during the Fellowship and designed projects with Reciprocal Exchange Awardees that were not only meaningful, but also benefited society or their community.

Capacity building was a common component of these Reciprocal Exchange projects, yielding a variety of positive outcomes. Training and capacity building introduced or improved skills in workplaces and educational institutions. Depending on the project, up to 3,000 persons benefited from capacity building directly. Skills building included areas such as prisoner reform, teaching styles, teaching people with disabilities, grant writing, community development, identification of at-risk schoolgirls for counseling, Design Thinking,<sup>18</sup> leadership, farming techniques, improved beekeeping, dance technique, inclusive sports development, and IT skills, among others.

One Kenyan Fellow shared that training farmers on marketing beekeeping products led to a positive impact on their home community and helped farmers generate extra income:

*“By introduction of a new product, the need for honey wax grew. I was able to sign on more farmers to provide honey and beeswax. The American professional also helped me to plan to train more farmers in my community ... equipping them with business skills that the farmers can use to upscale*

<sup>18</sup> Design Thinking is “a set of heuristics for guiding team-based thinking” (<https://designthinking.ideo.com/history>), process of understanding users, challenging assumptions and redefining problems to identify alternative strategies and solutions to solving problems for guiding team-based collaboration.

*their businesses. The [Fellowship] and Reciprocal Exchange have been life changing.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Kenyan Fellow*

Of particular note are Reciprocal Exchange projects targeting vulnerable groups and the impact they had on people’s lives. A Nigerian Fellow Alum in the Public Management track, noted that her project, which trained 400 teachers on how to improve the safety of children with autism or other special needs during a Safety Summit, increased awareness and benefited the local community and beyond Nigeria. Their work earned two recognitions in the safety community—the European Network of Safety and Education and Shining Star.

Several Reciprocal Exchange projects focused on vulnerable schoolgirls which included the organization of a “Girls Can Do Anything” conference in Ghana for over 2,000 girls, with follow-up mentorship. Another project in Ghana taught girls how to make reusable sanitary pads. Other projects helped adolescent girls improve management of menstrual needs, sensitized adolescent boys to sexual health and sensitivity to women’s issues, and helped girls develop confidence and leadership skills.

*“Introduction of mechanized palm kernel cracking for over 45 rural women helped improve the deplorable working and health conditions of rural women and over 200 rural children, especially girl children [whom] we liberated from forced labor.” Civic Leadership track, Cameroonian Fellow*

Reciprocal Exchange projects addressed a broad range of community needs and challenges, such as: empowering youth to lead climate change advocacy, training girls for financial independence, supporting Fellowship Alumni with disabilities to be community models and leaders, teaching sign language, building latrines in schools, teaching health care practices, and funding a crafts center for people with disabilities and an app to attract people to the centers.

### **KF 3.3: Reciprocal Exchange Projects Enhanced Fellows’ Ability to Access Funds, Grants, and Loans**

A number of Fellows felt that it would have been ideal to receive start-up funds when they returned from the United States, which would enable more participation in the Reciprocal Exchange component of the Fellowship. Funds would have helped them seed an idea as part of the Reciprocal Exchange program. The Reciprocal Exchange Award brought some funding, while a small portion of Reciprocal Exchange recipients were able to leverage more funds for their projects.

Fellows’ use of design thinking in their new or revised business plans was perceived to be instrumental in bringing some communities financial benefits. One respondent mentioned supporting the establishment of 42 businesses for GBV victims in Zambia, another mentioned a grant for crops and dairy market system development awarded to female farmers in Kenya, and another Alumnus noted their Reciprocal Exchange project empowered communities financially.

Of the surveyed Reciprocal Exchange Awardees, 74 percent of the 47 U.S. respondents said the Reciprocal Exchange projects were still ongoing in the countries where they were implemented, with 43 percent of them stating that they are still involved with the projects and

four percent saying that they were working on the projects but without the Fellows. Twenty-eight percent responded that the Fellows were still working on the project, however without the Awardee. A few of those who said that the projects were no longer ongoing (six percent) explained that the Reciprocal Exchange had led them to discover new collaborations. Over half (56 percent) of the respondents said they had been able to secure funding in addition to the original Reciprocal Exchange grants, and others (25 percent) said that they were applying or looking for new funding. A few Alumni were able to get funding on their own. The Reciprocal Exchange Awardees helped Fellows find and acquire funding they may not have otherwise found.

### **KF 3.4: Reciprocal Exchange Projects Helped Build Civic Leadership and Awareness of Human Rights**

Fellows and Reciprocal Exchange Awardees collaborated on Reciprocal Exchange projects that addressed important issues facing many Alumni in their countries, including lack of civic leadership and human rights concerns. Fellows who worked on Reciprocal Exchange projects revealed they had learned best practices and shared them with communities, looked at the resources in their communities with new eyes, set strategic goals, and used new decision-making tools.

Awareness raising was mentioned as part of capacity building of specific groups. This went beyond just increasing knowledge and spurred actions for the betterment of communities. For example, in Kenya, where there was a gap in knowledge of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities, a 2015 Public Management Fellow, said that the Reciprocal Exchange expanded his personal knowledge and that he hoped to publish research on LGBT rights awareness. A Reciprocal Exchange Awardee collaborated with Fellows to improve human rights: one with women's groups in Africa on land ownership/ access and improved food security, and another to help strengthen leadership/ management skills of human rights organizations.

*One Reciprocal Exchange project focused on training teachers in Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) to engage students more dynamically in the classroom. The Awardees said that teachers had felt positive about the engagement of the students and that there had been further exchanges, with a Fellow and PhD student attending more workshops in the United States and South Africans applying for more POGIL grants.*

Other capacity building and awareness raising projects included applying 'spatial awareness' to communities, training 200 youths in new curricula while also training facilitators to train trainers, teaching high school teachers in techniques to stimulate independent thinking, giving engineering courses, conducting design thinking workshops, developing a National Fire Force, and training in Emergency Management Systems (EMS).

Knowledge exchange was another topic mentioned frequently by Fellows involved with the Reciprocal Exchange program component. The exchange had supported community-building, for example, creating a collaborative filmmaking community and bringing together USAID, representatives of farmers and rural community leaders and international organizations to discuss food security and address rural community programs. In Benin, a Reciprocal Exchange project on education about nutritious foods for malnourished children raised

awareness of the need to introduce highly nutritious plants such as moringa into their diets to improve food security.

A number of Reciprocal Exchange projects focused on income generation: a fish farming project, funding of project proposals for a solar company, agricultural projects, and student entrepreneur start-up ventures (in Nairobi, Kenya); building capacity to advocate for human rights through workshops for people without legal representation; and training in disability rights advocacy.

### **KF 3.5: Reciprocal Exchange Projects Built Entrepreneurship Expertise and Improved Incomes**

Business incubation methods and principles were taught at a number of Institutes. With the Reciprocal Exchange Awardee and the funds associated with the Reciprocal Exchange, Alumni were able to put into action what they learned. A number of Reciprocal Exchange projects focused on women and youth empowerment reaching more than 10,000 people through training in entrepreneurial skills (business start-up); hydroponics and aquaponics; agribusiness; and STEM subjects. Some projects sensitized youth on violence and social responsibility, engaged youth volunteers, or mentored women in specific skills development. Respondents noted that some of these activities had benefits, such as liberating children from forced labor and improving income opportunities and investments. Other Reciprocal Exchange projects include design thinking for businesses and applied research for on/off grid solar systems working with small solar companies and a government utility.

Building entrepreneurship had concrete financial benefits for participating businesses, organizations and communities. Fellows said that some projects they had worked with contributed to increased incomes of those on the project, such as women, farmers, and others. Examples of Reciprocal Exchange projects that supported youth and start-ups included training more than 100 youths in startup and business skills in Malawi and supporting a start-up “Benue” 4H organization that managed afterschool clubs for gardening, STEM, entrepreneurship, and mentoring in Nigeria.

*“We are currently working on supporting 4,500 women and adolescent girl smallholder farmers and those in the agricultural value chain under a USAID grant... to increase their income.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Kenyan Fellow*

### **KF 3.6 Reciprocal Exchange Projects Applied Innovations for New and Improved Products and Use of New Technologies**

Innovative processes and products involve changes in planning, design, implementation, and production of resources to make systems more functional and productive. Some Reciprocal Exchange projects worked with communities to improve operational systems and enhance products and services for end-users. Design Thinking, a topic Institutes taught Fellows, was referenced in a number of Reciprocal Exchange projects as an innovative way at looking at things.

Innovative products and techniques promoted by Fellows in Reciprocal Exchange projects supported improvements in their home communities. Examples include the promotion of new



products (from beeswax and rice) and new ways to generate income (home stays for local tourism, aquaponics).

*“My involvement in the Reciprocal Exchange allowed me to build innovative machinery that will help reduce waste of fruits by preserving surplus fruits and transforming them into useful commodities that will be sold to reinvest in youth development and employment in my home community.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Congolese Fellow*

Fellows are making new technology available in their African countries through Reciprocal Exchanges. For example, training people to use a supercomputer from Case Western Reserve University and distributing a free open-source application that helps children out of school learn to read. Another success story is around a learning model for students in resource-limited environments. A Business & Entrepreneurship Fellow was selected as one of the Brightest Young Minds in South Africa and won the Alberto Madella Award. The Fellow worked with a renowned Reciprocal Exchange Awardee neurolinguistic specialist who created an NGO to teach reading regardless of location or resources. Together they developed a learning app now available in 11 South African languages and robust learning centers for children.

Other examples of innovations and new technologies that helped local communities include helping the disabled and improving medical outcomes. One Reciprocal Exchange Awardee and Fellowship Alumnus were involved in building a satellite center to provide assistive devices for the blind and train teachers of the blind at the Ngculwini Disability Resource Center in Swaziland. In Nigeria, one Alum who felt the Reciprocal Exchange contributed to leading in innovations and quality, said their project, the development of a new procedure, “will reduce the incidence and possibly eliminate the complications of neonatal jaundice.”

## CONCLUSIONS

### **C3.1 Solid Relationship Development between the Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Fellows**

Both Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and their partner Fellows felt that personal relationships had been enhanced and solidified through frequent communication and technical support, including development of proposals and access to funding opportunities. In most exchanges, the Reciprocal Exchange Awardee felt they gained more than they gave, and felt personally and professionally enriched by the experience, giving them a new perspective and energy on their own work and respect for the challenges the Fellows face in their home countries. These relationships more often than not went beyond the project, to others in the organization or community and in some cases to other countries. Some Reciprocal Exchange Awardees felt they were giving back especially to those who attended trainings. Relationships developed are not only professional, but also personal and enduring and communication exchanges were generated from both partners.

### **C3.2 Reciprocal Exchange Projects Brought Intrinsic Value-Add**

The Reciprocal Exchange component has grown in the number of awardees and in popularity. It is difficult to measure the outcomes and impacts of these projects in more precise terms, but both Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Alumni felt there had been tangible short- and potentially long-term impacts on both African and American communities. The exchange

often elevated the work of the Fellow, with some Fellows receiving awards, certificates, or other recognition. Design thinking was an instrumental approach in shifting strategic directions of some organizations. Overall, there was a net positive for program operations and management and in some projects, generation of income for participants, and potential for additional funding possibilities in the future. The Reciprocal Exchange program component brought changes to both American and African communities and organizations and to a lesser extent, helped to strengthen ties between the United States and Africa.

## EVALUATION QUESTION 4

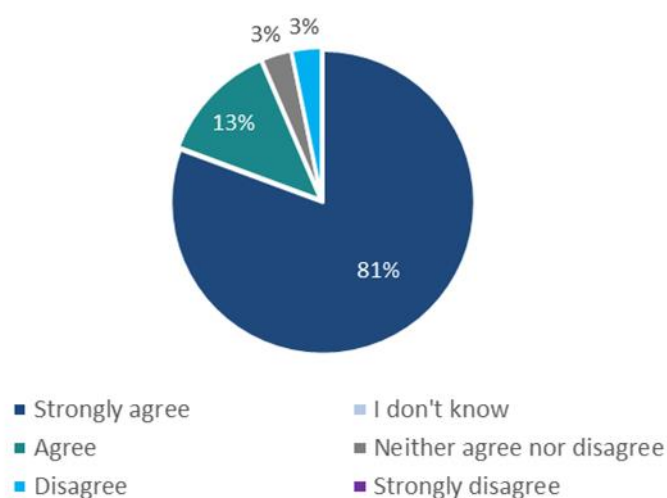
*In what ways does the Mandela Washington Fellowship benefit local American communities?*

### KEY FINDINGS

The Mandela Washington Fellowship made a positive impact on local American communities in multiple ways. The program enhanced globalization and cross-cultural understanding in the United States, it increased the knowledge and skills of Americans, strengthened ties between host institutions and communities, and generated multiple new projects and partnerships that benefit the United States. Fellows also made a positive impact on U.S. communities through community service activities.

Ninety-four percent of U.S. community member surveyed felt their local community had benefited from the Fellowship (**Figure 6**). Of the 113 community member respondents, 40 percent were community partner representatives including organizations, businesses or agencies that Fellows visited during the Fellowship, 30 percent were peer collaborators and mentors including professionals who engaged with Fellows in a peer, mentor or other professional capacity during the Fellowship, 17 percent were home stay hosts who were groups or individuals who hosted Fellows for occasional dinners or a weekend during their Fellowship, and 13 percent were representatives from community service organizations that hosted Fellows for community service events and/or information sessions.

**I think that my local community has benefited from the Mandela Washington Fellowship**

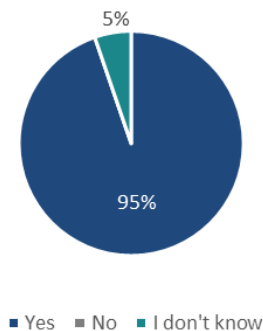


*Figure 6. U.S. Community Benefit [Source: U.S. Community Member Survey]*

Home stay hosts were asked if they and/or other members of their household benefited from interacting with the Fellows (see **Figure 7**). All but one respondent said they benefited from interacting with the Fellows.

Approximately one hundred Fellows stay on in the United States at the conclusion of the Institute program for the PDE in a U.S. business, civic organization or government office. Among PDE Hosts surveyed, 28 of the 29 respondents said that the Fellow(s) contributed to their organization while one respondent said that they did not.

**Do you feel that you and/or other members of your household benefited from interacting with the Fellow/s?**



*Figure 7. Benefit to Household [Source: U.S. Community Member Survey]*

#### **KF 4.1: The Fellowship Enhanced Globalization and Cross-Cultural Understanding in the United States Among University Faculty & Staff**

Among Institute staff members surveyed, the majority (86 percent) stated that the program increased cross-cultural understanding in their community.

Of the interviews with Institute staff, 20 percent of the responses specifically mentioned they enjoyed learning from the Fellows, that they gained a deeper, more sophisticated understanding about Africa from working with them, or that they gained a new awareness of the diversity of African cultures. One Kansas State University (KSU) Institute staff member mentioned that hosting the Fellows “. . . expanded the understanding of diversity and inclusion” at their university. A staff member at the Presidential Precinct said that the Fellowship program contributed to global conversations:

*“I have absolutely been opened up to so many parts of the world, challenges in the world, beautiful things that that part of the world can contribute to our global conversations. I can guarantee you without this fellowship I wouldn’t have been. That’s what’s kept me at the Precinct, I get to travel to the coolest places mentally. I get to share a little bit of our space, place with them. There’s this really great exchange that goes on.— I get to learn from interesting places while still investing in my local area at the same time.” Institute Staff, Presidential Precinct*

An Institute Staff Member from KSU said that the Fellowship program was “. . . “a highlight of my professional career . . . I’ve learned an incredible amount and my scholarship has shifted. I look at how civic leadership interventions work in the long term and how that looks when it is deployed on the continent vs the U.S.”. An Institute Staff Member from Rutgers said that as a result of the Fellowship, “. . . My knowledge of Africa has grown exponentially.” A couple of Institute staff members said that hosting the Fellows helped their institution attract new opportunities with other agencies, and one respondent noted that hosting the program has led the university to do more outreach to Africa. Another respondent shared this impact story:

*“I think different groups are impacted in different ways – the greatest impact is informing relationships and for students it flips a switch to understand there is a broader world. (I am) . . . thinking of a student we work with who then went on to do his masters in Georgetown and was working at the State Department in Consular Affairs and he just got back to Kansas City and that experience working with the Fellows his junior or senior year just shifted his trajectory completely.” Institute Staff, KSU*

#### **KF 4.2: Increased Job Skills Among Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Knowledge Among U.S. Community Members**

The majority (87 percent) of Reciprocal Exchange Awardees from the United States reported that the award helped them develop job skills that transferred to their home communities. Examples of types of skills gained included becoming a “better, more empathetic and knowledgeable educator” to strengthened skills as a program manager to improved organizational skills.

U.S. Community members reported gaining new knowledge as a result of the Fellowship program. More than half of the respondents said that the most beneficial part of being a peer collaborator, mentor or professional contact for the Fellows was that they learned new things, they enjoyed the knowledge sharing and mutual exchange of ideas, and appreciated learning about different approaches to addressing mutual problems.

A few (17 percent) Community members mentioned that the Fellows brought a new understanding of the similarities between African and American communities. Two respondents said that hosting Fellows changed preconceived notions about Africa. One Peer Collaborator referred to the experience as “life-changing.” Another was so inspired by the Fellows that she decided to start her own business. One Community Member said:

*“From the community perspective it opens up eyes on both side - in my company it opened up eyes to the best and brightest that we may want to recruit or partner with. With some of the other companies, I know they have seen some of the things they (the Fellows) have done, it opens up eyes more in the U.S. – From working with universities and bringing students on, from a diversity standpoint it opens up eyes of students. Many U.S. citizens don’t have a passport, U.S. citizens don’t understand history and geography like we should and this provides another way to learn.”*  
*Community Member, Clark Atlanta*

And another Community Member said:

*“Our knowledge of the African continent, culture, is second-hand – what we see on television, hear on webcasts. Nothing can replace the direct contact and exposure. I think it (the Fellowship) helps our populace to get a better understanding. A fuller understanding of the educational, business, civic culture of their countries. They get that direct exposure. I know it has an effect, we saw it in a number of folks in the surrounding communities that have interacted with the fellows, taking trips to some of these countries. Perhaps they may not have made these trips before having exposure to the fellows and having their interest piqued to other cultures.”*  
*Community Member, UC Davis*

A Community Member at Rutgers explained how the Fellowship program opened up their world and enhanced their global understanding, as they lived in a small town and were not really exposed to different cultures.

Among PDE hosts surveyed, quite a few (about 14 percent) also reported that they learned and gained new perspectives from the Fellows. For example, one respondent said:

*“It has enabled me to make other contributions to young professionals beyond those in the Fellowship. Broadened my areas of interest to include CSR (corporate social responsibility), which is an area that many of the papers that I’ve been working on with different colleagues have been focused on, and corporate governance.” PDE Host, Pennsylvania*

Reciprocal Exchange awardees noted that they had gained an increased level of knowledge and understanding from Fellows that positively impacted their own work. Nearly a fifth (21 percent) of respondents reported that their community had increased knowledge of African contexts, markets/ industries and systems, and 18 percent said the Reciprocal Exchange resulted in stronger global ties to Africa. Another said the Reciprocal Exchange helped her rethink the way she was teaching:

*“When I got back home (to the U.S.), I rethought the way I was teaching classes, how to make them responsive to student needs and more engaging with their cultural background and cultural assets. I’ve shared that with other faculty and faculty senate meetings.”*  
*Reciprocal Exchange, UC Davis*

#### **KF 4.3: Improved Curricula and Learning Experiences for Host Institutes and Students**

Several peer collaborator and mentor respondents mentioned that because of what they had learned, they were able to expose their students to a new and richer set of perspectives that allowed them to offer students a more globalized academic experience on campus. For example, one Institute Staff Member said:

*“... the examples we use in class are richer and more global than they used to be. . . It’s made our faculty basically more worldly - they have broader experience to draw on to illuminate the theories. In addition, we have gained theories and knowledge we weren’t exposed to before. Most of leadership theory comes from a white, traditional, American leadership perspective so it’s brought broader perspective.” Leadership*  
*Institute Staff Member, KSU*

And a peer collaborator said about the Fellowship:

*“It directly ties into Georgia Tech school creating world citizens to improve the human condition. That’s a big lofty goal but that’s what [Mandela Washington] Fellows represent. They represent the political cultural social economic conditions of their countries. We know how it is in Georgia, but this has tremendous educational value to expose both sides on the political, economic, and innovation perspective.” Mentor, Clark*  
*Atlanta University*

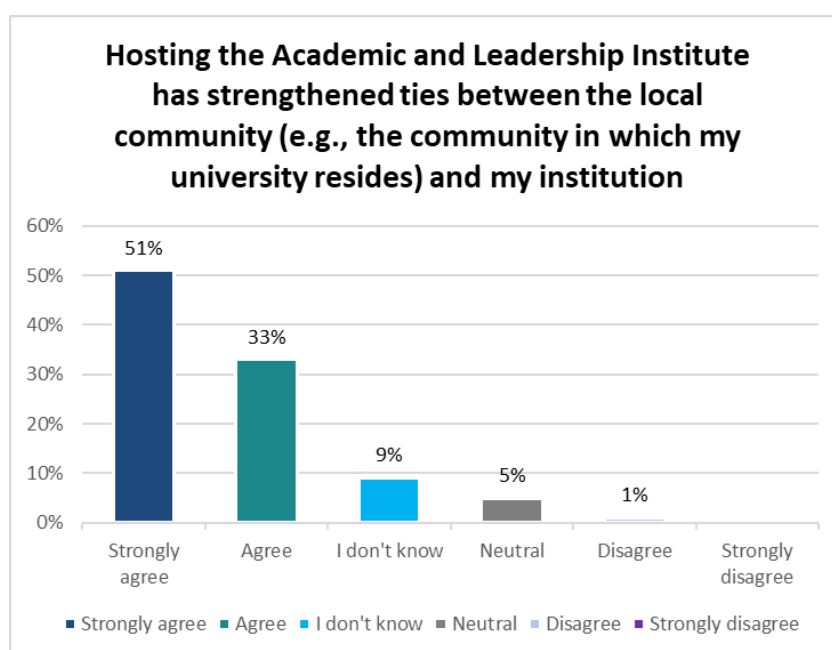
When asked if the Fellowship supported internationalization of their institution, 86 percent of Institute respondents stated that it did. In follow-up interviews, four Institute respondents and one Peer Mentor mentioned that their program or curricula was improved or internationalized as a result of the program. One KSU faculty member, for example, reported that the experience working with Fellows has impacted his/her work. An Institute staff member said:

*“...it gives Rutgers a chance to internationalize their faculty and create connections on the continent. It has changed the way some of our faculty think about globalization. The value of having [the Fellowship] on campus is high.” Institute Staff, Rutgers University*

#### **KF 4.4: The Fellowship Strengthened Ties and Inspired New Partnerships Between Host Institutes, Local Organizations, And Corporations**

The visits that Fellows made to local companies, non-profits, and government agencies over their six-week U.S. program were key to strengthened ties between the local community and Institutes. As seen in **Figure 8**, overall, 84 percent of Institute staff reported that hosting the Institute had strengthened ties between the local community and their institution.

Institute staff-members reported that the visits led to more awareness about the types of programs that the host universities offered within their local communities, as well as resulted in new ties with community organizations. The majority (51 percent) of respondents reported that their university’s participation in the Fellowship was extremely or very influential in building existing and relationships with private companies and a majority (57 percent) reported that



*Figure 8. Strengthened Ties Between U.S. Communities and Institutions [Source: Academic and Leadership Institute Survey]*

Fellowship was extremely or very influential in forming new relationships or partnerships with private companies as well. A majority (70 percent) reported that the Fellowship supported the strengthening of existing relationships with local or state governments as well as in forming new relationships with them (66 percent). For example, one respondent shared, “The Davis city government, including past and current mayors and administrative staff, have developed a new relationship through the Institute.” Additionally, the former mayor of Davis, CA now works at the university as a result of the Fellowship program (UC Davis, Institute staff).

*“Representatives from the business participated in our peer networking event. As result, they become more aware of the types of leadership learning and development the Staley School could offer companies.”*  
*Institute Staff, KSU*

In a few cases, Fellows helped build and maintain Institute-community ties and continued relationships with community organizations after their Fellowship ended. For example, a Fellow returned on more than one occasion to continue to collaborate with community leaders and to bring other professionals from their country to the United States on a “private version of the Fellowship” while another Fellow returned to make a film about their host city and businesses “to offer an example of a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem that other cities can learn from in Africa.”

And an Institute Staff member from Clark Atlanta University noted the impact of the Fellowship on stronger relationships between the university and global companies: “[The Fellowship program] enhanced relationships with large global companies with interests in Africa and is building bridges from our community of exchange and those of the companies in the respective African communities.”

#### **KF 4.5: Hosting the Fellowship Generated New Projects and Partnerships Between University Faculty, Staff, and Local Community Members with Ongoing Engagement Between the United States and Africa**

The Mandela Washington Fellowship program generated numerous follow-on activities in the form of new projects and partnerships between the United States and Africa. Half of the Institute survey respondents (50 percent) provided examples of collaborations or joint activities that were a result of the Fellowship. Quite a few (32 percent) PDE hosts reported that the experience resulted in some type of collaboration between personnel from their organization and the Fellow that their organization hosted.

Institutes provided the space for partnerships and projects to begin and flourish via networking opportunities. Examples of the types of projects or partnerships that the Fellowship program generated were joint projects in the areas of biology/entomology (UC Davis), veterinary sciences (KSU), energy efficiency (UC Davis), gender (KSU), leadership and organizational change (Presidential Precinct), joint development of a ventilator prototype (University of Iowa), and global entrepreneurship (Rutgers University). Additional examples included the formation of virtual consulting business projects (University of Iowa), documentary films (Drake University and Georgia State), joint proposal writing for a new community center in Africa (Virginia Polytechnic), and the commercialization of a product resulting from joint research (Drake University). One quarter (25 percent) of respondents also cited joint grant applications or complementary funding proposals that were a result of the Fellowship program.

Collaborations took the form of several articles co-authored by Fellows and Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Reciprocal Exchange grants to fund travel and joint research. In an example of post-Fellowship engagement, Alumni served as experts on a panel about the Ebola outbreak and spoke to community-members, doctors, veterinarians, and public health workers (KSU).



In another example of a new project generated by the Fellowship program, Fellows at Rutgers helped a local business develop their strategy that was later submitted for funding.

*“For the 2017 cohorts there was an entrepreneur here who was a colleague of mine who was developing a business strategy for solar panels so I decided it was a great opportunity to show what they can do so I had the entrepreneur come in and give a presentation...the Fellowship helped them develop their strategy and develop the package they needed to go and present to this financial group. The Fellows were helping a local business develop their strategy and that was unique and different,”* ALI Program Director, Rutgers University

A few respondents reported that, post-Fellowship, Alumni stayed engaged with their respective host Institutes by conducting Zoom or Skype classes with students at the host university or by serving as subject experts. In some cases, Alumni return to the campus to teach or advise students. Among the Reciprocal Exchange Awardees surveyed, a few (seven percent) reported benefits from the Reciprocal Exchange partnership included tangible goods or services, agreements for future collaboration such as a Memoranda of Understanding, or they expanded into new markets.

*“It also seems like someone in our school is on the continent at all times. . . all this reciprocal partnership that has occurred and tons of relationships – we’re writing journal articles and sharing resources and building relationships - people have found all sorts of ways to fund projects with Fellows. . . We worked with women from rural communities about gender equity and women’s empowerment and gender roles and leadership. It was very impactful – I taught things I teach here in a totally different context. It helped me understand the content even more. The impact on my students is also an impact on me. Having the presence of [Mandela Washington] Fellows every year – has all these spiral benefits for our community and our students.”*

*KSU Institute Staff*

Quite a few (33 percent) Reciprocal Exchange Awardees reported a number of other types of benefits, such as making changes in the way they or their organization accomplish their work.

*“I was able to take the content derived from the research and apply it to my projects.”* SME Founder, California

#### **KF 4.6: Community Service Projects Strengthened Relationships Between the United States and African Countries and Had a Positive Impact on U.S. Communities**

Community service by the Fellows was mentioned in both surveys and interviews as having a positive impact on American communities. Among the many examples of community service that Fellows engaged in included: mentoring students in a summer supply chain management program (Newark), providing meals to those experiencing food insecurity (Presidential Precinct), and working with youth at an outreach program (Atlanta, Georgia). One respondent explained,

*“The time the Fellows take to stay for lunch with us is a major help for our kids and staff. Having that personal interaction and getting to let our kids be curious and ask all of their fun questions to the fellows has been a huge benefit to our community.”* Community Member, UC Davis



Fellows also volunteered for a bike share program, assisted with collecting and processing donations, and worked with a community organization on an action plan:

*“We work with Jersey City Black Wall Street and at the time we brought Fellows to them they were still working on organizational chart and program specific criteria and when they met with Fellows it was symbiotic. After the initial meeting a lot of people took a lot of notes (and) we ended up leaving with opportunities for Fellows to return to Jersey City to help Black Wall Street move forward with a plan. ... it turned into a very beneficial opportunity for both”. Institute Professor, Rutgers*

Fellow participation in community service was perceived as a positive impact in the practical help that they provided and in the benefit to community relations. For example, in describing the Fellows role in a local road race, one respondent noted:

*“...having fellows there at the . . . race is impactful for the community. We couldn’t hold the event without volunteers and it’s economically impactful for Atlanta. They are upholding the tradition and legacy of the race. Last year was the 50<sup>th</sup> year and they continue that legacy and they are part of the growth and excitement of the event.” Community Member, Atlanta, GA*

While the Institutes includes approximately five community service opportunities into the summer program – typically one per week – to provide the Fellows firsthand experience with not-for-profit organizations and volunteerism, the relatively small percentage of time spent appears to have a welcome and positive impact on community relations and support to the organizations involved.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **C4.1 The Fellowship Has a Positive Impact on Cross-Cultural Understanding in the United States**

Institutes became more globalized and Americans increased their level of cross-cultural understanding as a result of the Fellowship program. Community members and Peer Collaborators reported that they learned about Africa and gained a new understanding of African cultures through the Fellows. Host institutions benefited from staff members gaining a deeper understanding of Africa and were able to offer their students a more globalized academic experience as a result.

### **C4.2 The Fellowship Builds Ties Between Host Universities and Local Communities**

As a result of the robust community outreach component of the Fellowship program, both the host institutions and community organizations and local businesses benefit and build stronger ties. Program activities in the community raise awareness about the host universities and colleges which result in stronger relationships and the development of new ones.

### **C4.3 The Fellowship Generates New United States-Africa Projects and Partnerships**

The program strengthened U.S.–Africa engagement, resulting in new projects and partnerships. These collaborations were a direct result of the relationships formed between Fellows and their host institutions and communities during the program and provided both

tangible and less tangible benefits such as making changes in how work was accomplished, in increased knowledge and stronger ties, to the Fellows and to the United States.

#### **C4.4 The Community Service Component Benefited U.S. Communities and Built Positive Relationships Between Fellows and Communities**

The community service component was a small part of the Fellowship program but served to strengthen relationships between the United States and Africa and positively impact U.S. communities. Host organizations received practical help and support from the Fellows which was greatly valued and appreciated.

### **EVALUATION QUESTION 5**

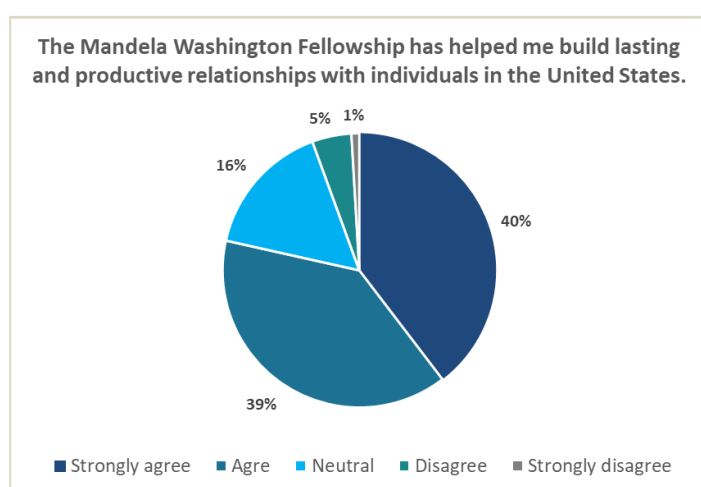
*To what extent has the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship built lasting and productive relationships, both personal and institutional, between the United States and other countries?*

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The foundations of Fellowship relationships began with the Fellows' time in the United States. Fellows developed or honed networking skills at the Institutes where they met faculty, Africans from other countries, community members and others. Participants in the PDEs established additional work-related relationships and expanded their networks. Fellows used these connections on return to their countries, where they engaged with Alumni and the larger YALI network. These productive associations and connections have led to opportunities to attend conferences, collaborate on business or research ideas, share technical and business advice, and build alliances between countries. Perhaps more important are the camaraderie and friendships that Alumni mentioned, which can foster learning among countries to inform social and economic growth and mitigate future conflicts.

Most countries have established Alumni networks, and Fellows have formed WhatsApp and Facebook groups as well as regional networks all which foster pan-Africa relationships, both business and personal. DOS, ECA, IREX, and U.S. Embassies are key in maintaining Fellows' relationships with the United States and Alumni networks by facilitating these networking components.

When the evaluators asked Alumni, Institute staff, community members, PDEs and Reciprocal Exchange Awardees whether the Fellowship program had helped build lasting and productive relationships, both personal and institutional, between the United States and other African countries, nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of the Alumni agreed or strongly agreed (**Figure 9**). Three-fourths (73 percent) of the community members and service organizations, peer collaborators, home stay hosts, and others surveyed who had



*Figure 9. Lasting and Productive Relationships [Source: Fellowship Alumni Survey]*

engaged with Academic and Leadership Institutes agreed or strongly agreed that the Institutes had helped build lasting and productive personal and institutional relationships between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa.

#### EQ5A) IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTED NETWORKING/ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WIDER EXCHANGE ALUMNI NETWORK?

##### KF.5a.1. The Fellowship Established Effective Mechanisms for Alumni-To-Alumni Networking and Engagement

U.S. Embassies typically support networking and engagement at the country level, which facilitate networking for events, work, funding or community service opportunities in each country through the Alumni Associations. Another mechanism for networking is the social media connections established primarily by IREX and the Alumni themselves (**Table 4**). WhatsApp, Facebook, and in-person visits are the most common means of communication among Alumni for both personal and professional purposes.

*Table 4 Networking and Engagement Avenues Among Fellowship Alumni*

How does the Fellowship support Alumni connection?	How was it established?	How effective it is in facilitating the connection?
<b>WhatsApp groups</b>	By Fellowship Alumni by Program track, Institute, cohort, professional interests, friendships	Group members invest in each other's success, have a strong sense of camaraderie and belonging <sup>19</sup> and advertise and encourage prospective Fellows to apply for the Fellowship.
<b>WhatsApp groups</b>	By Academic and Leadership Institutes	Groups inform Alumni of their colleagues' work and successes and facilitate research and U.S.-Africa collaboration.
<b>Facebook Group for Reciprocal Exchange Awardees</b>	By IREX	This group facilitated connections among Reciprocal Exchange Awardees who were part of the Reciprocal Exchange program component.
<b>Facebook Groups for Fellowship</b>	By IREX	Fellows share announcements, notices of online courses, and success stories and have virtual meetings by cohorts and Institutes.
<b>Email, phone, Twitter, SMS, etc.</b>	One-on-one (Institutes, Alumni, U.S. Embassy, etc.)	Direct communication to organize work- or research-related events, etc., strengthens relationships.
<b>Countries' Alumni Association and Networks</b>	By U.S. Embassies and Alumni	Brings Alumni together for events such as Mandela Days, informs them of funding opportunities, and helps bring in prospective Mandela Fellowship applicants.

#### EQ5B) IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTED NETWORKING/ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER FELLOWS ACROSS SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA?

Opportunities to connect Fellows are unbounded, facilitating pan-African relationships and collaborations. Similar to the **Table 4** above, these platforms and networking support mechanisms facilitate Alumni collaboration with other Fellowship Alumni in their own countries and across Africa. U.S. Embassies organize meetings, speaking engagements,

<sup>19</sup> An Open-Source and Social Media Analysis of Alumni and General Interactions and Perceptions. June 2020, Guidehouse. Washington, DC

events, and funding opportunities; support Alumni Associations (sometimes called Alumni Councils); and coordinate with YALI RLCs and the YALI Network. From the interviews with Alumni, they shared they are in constant communications via WhatsApp. Interestingly, the Nigeria WhatsApp group is so full, there is no room for additional people to join.

### **KF 5b.1: Alumni Associations Are Active and Vital for Ongoing Alumni Engagement**

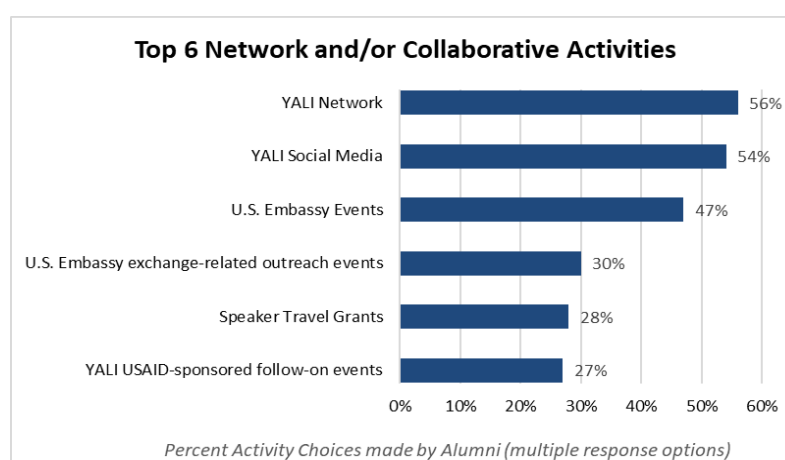
Alumni Associations are channels for networking and collaboration (via optional membership). Alumni Associations serve various purposes, such as building intra-country relationships, collaborations, sharing funding opportunities, promotions of avenues for personal and professional growth, and coalescing activities around conflict mitigation and resolution. Fellows mentioned spontaneous networking and collaboration on WhatsApp and Facebook, jointly organizing events on Mandela Day (July 18) and collaborating on grant applications. Alumni shared that sometimes they connected or collaborated with other countries' Alumni Associations on events.

*“... when the collaboration grant came through, I worked at the Madagascar Economic Development Board in the IT sector ... the Fellow helps foreign investors set up FDI [foreign direct investment] in Madagascar, and ... identified companies that had tried many ways to make the process of licensing easier, but they were still struggling in getting more investors ... I work in design thinking ... and could help her company and other NGOs. When the application came out, I then had to run a project—budgeting, deliverables, etc., doing that process and applying for a grant. In April, I got to go to Madagascar ... but the cost of living in Madagascar was high, so I stayed with the other Fellow to cut down on costs, and the workshop had high turnout ... The space from the Alumna was found because the Madagascar Alums know each other ... they came to the workshop and spread the word.” Civic Leadership track, South African Fellow*

For those who did not join or participate in Alumni Associations, they often noted that some events were too far from Alumni's homes for them to attend, lack of interest, or they desired to disengage from the post-Fellowship activities.

### **KF 5b.2: Structures Established by the Fellowship Are Conduits to Fellowship Relationships and Collaborative Engagement**

Figure 10 shows activities that helped Alumni meet, network, and collaborate with Fellows from other African countries. YALI-originated social media and networks top the list,



*Figure 10. Top 6 Network and/or Collaboration Activities [Source: Fellowship Alumni Survey]*

followed by U.S. Embassy organized events. Others mentioned were International Exchange Alumni, American Spaces, the ECA Alumni Office, YALI massive open online courses (MOOCs), Institute-led activities, RLC activities, USADF grants, and Speaker Travel Grants. To further facilitate networking, the Fellowship program developed a social media guide for the Fellows.

“Other” responses included connecting with other Alumni through WhatsApp, events organized by NGOs, yearly outreach for youth from every tribe and region organized by the Mandela Washington Fellowship Association for Cameroon, and the University of Cape Town Emerging African Leaders Programme. A small number of respondents answered “None.” No one mentioned the Institute-dedicated channel on RocketHub. Respondents who did not mention any activities suggested that the Fellowship support networking and/or engagement by hosting formal events with Alumni, emailing information about Fellowship networking opportunities hosted by other Fellows, and providing additional opportunities for Reciprocal Exchange projects. Alumni said that they found opportunities to meet, network and/or collaborate with Fellows from other countries through network contacts, social media, Embassies or directly with each other by other means.

*“[The] biggest asset is the network gained from the Fellowship. You go from small networks to a network from a cohort across the continent ... ”*  
*Business & Entrepreneurship track, Cameroonian Fellow*

Less formal social and professional networks are formed through social media, where Fellows learned about international conferences, were invited to speak and sometimes receive funding to attend conferences. Key Fellowship actors such as IREX and U.S. Embassies, established network facilitation tools – e.g. Fellow’s Page to see Fellows names and faces (IREX) and lists of organizations with which to network.

EQ5C): IN WHAT WAYS DO THE FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE THEY MET ON THEIR EXCHANGE PROGRAM ONCE THEY RETURN HOME?

### KF 5c.1 Fellowship Alumni Keep Most in Touch with Alumni from Their Own Country and Alumni from Other African Countries

Nearly all Alumni surveyed said they stayed in touch with one or more persons they met during the U.S. Exchange in various ways (Figure 11). Of the peer collaborators, mentors and other professional contacts interviewed in the United States, 88 percent said they stay in touch with Fellows a few times a year or at

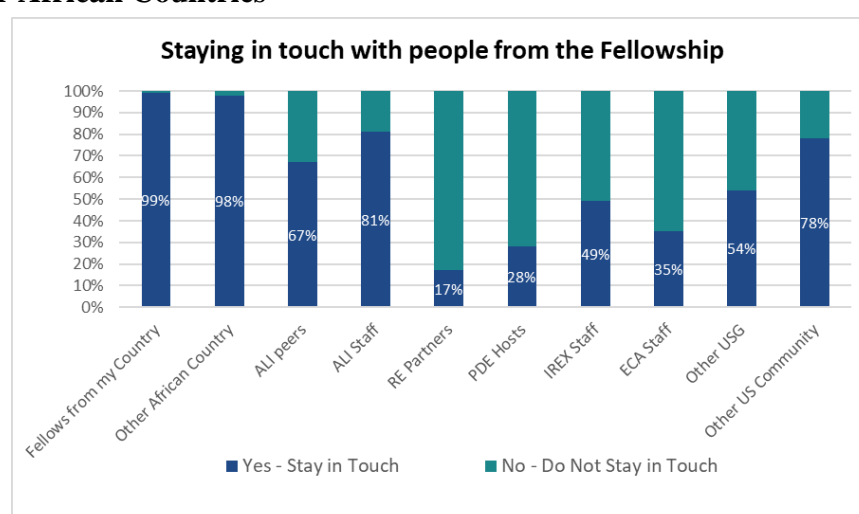


Figure 11. Stakeholders Fellows Stayed in Touch With [Source: Fellowship Alumni Survey]

least once a month. Some relationships go beyond simple communications and included sharing ideas, collaborating on work-related activities, conducting research with universities, links to conferences with U.S. connections, business development, advisory, and ongoing learning.

Relationships between Fellowship Alumni and people in the United States are both professional and productive. Most Alumni (78 percent) said these relationships are ongoing and productive, however fewer Alumni (43 percent) mentioned they have ongoing relationships with business and/or organizations. Institute staff, peer collaborators, community hosts and PDE Host Organizations generally described the relationships as symbiotic and said that they had built strong cohorts and relationships among the Fellows. Institute staff said they have strengthened relationships within their universities and research ties with Fellows, leveraging the global department, and forging new relationships and unique corporate partnerships. A couple of Institute staff said that building relationships with PDE Host Organizations has not only been a learning experience for the Fellows but also benefits the universities in terms of collaborations, research, and new relationships with students and staff. From the U.S. communities' perspective, relationships with the Fellows in smaller towns may have had a bigger impact.

*"We have established a relationship afterwards that has become long-term.  
... if this program continues, we expect to be doing more work on the  
continent in the future. It's the cornerstone of our international program."  
Community member, Clark Atlanta University*

African community members were asked about any ongoing organizational/community relationships with the United States to gauge the extent to which there were any impacts. Only a handful are aware of any relationships, suggesting the Alums' community awareness of engagement with U.S. organizations was limited; albeit the pool of community members interviewed was small.

Nearly all Fellows said that they keep in touch with people met during the Fellowship, especially those from their own cohort. Some Institutes developed their own networks with and among Alumni. For example, Rutgers University created a searchable database to connect 2014 to 2018 Alumni, and the Presidential Precinct has created a similar network. These networks keep Alumni connected to the Institute, the host community and to any cohort of the Fellowship, facilitating relationships, collaborations, and research.

*"The African Global Chamber of Commerce formed relationships with  
Fellows and subsequently sponsored them to come to events in the city."  
Institute Staff Academic Director*

It was difficult for some Reciprocal Exchange Awardees interviewed to gauge if their projects built relationships between Americans and Africans in the countries where they worked. Relationships are built with individual Fellows, and most of these continue. One respondent cited a mentorship connection, while another said small-town residents were interested in connections with Africans (and the wider world) and he hoped the Reciprocal Exchange would create a better model for community engagement.

### **KF 5c.2 The PDE and Reciprocal Exchange Components of the Fellowship Foster Long-Term Relationships Between the United States and Alumni.**

Relationships between PDE Hosts, Reciprocal Exchange Awardees, and their respective Alumni appear to be longer-term. More than three-fourths (79 percent) of the PDE Host organizations surveyed said that the Fellowship had helped them build lasting and productive relationships with Fellows, 16 percent were neutral and six percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Most of the relationships that Alumni mentioned were with Institute staff and community hosts, usually individuals who had stood out, reached out, and stayed in contact with the Alumni. PDE Host Organizations interviewed did not use the words “long-lasting relationships,” but a number mentioned how they stayed connected by means of ongoing communication, largely via WhatsApp and Facebook, and through important personal experiences. Most PDE Host Organizations stayed in touch with Fellows once a year or more (68 percent) or every few years (9 percent), or with other varying frequencies of contact (23 percent).

In interviews with Alumni in Africa, 85 percent of the Alumni involved with a Reciprocal Exchange Awardee keep in touch with the Awardees once a month or at least a few times a year and maintain both professional/mentoring and personal connections.

PDE Hosts were asked about impacts in their organization and any ongoing collaboration with Alumni. Most (97 percent) of the PDE Host organizations surveyed said Fellows had made cultural, academic or business contributions. Examples include:

- The legwork for a sector workshop to be held in her country a few months after the PDE;
- Shared with National Democratic Institute (NDI) colleagues their perspectives on challenges to engaging youth in democracy and governance in Guinea-Bissau;
- Conducted research for scholars to inform media interactions;
- Published blogs and contributed to a flagship publication;
- Created an app for virtual patient visits;
- Developed a communications strategy for a program;
- Delivered webinars; and,
- Reported on a program evaluation.

Host organizations’ staff responded that they gained personally from their engagement with Fellows during the PDEs through learning about their countries’ culture(s) and customs (18 percent), business and economic environments (14 percent), religious and/or ethnic diversity (14 percent), and professions (12 percent). They had been encouraged by their organization or others to host international Fellows or students (12 percent), learned to work better in multicultural teams (nine percent), interacted with people from other cultures/countries (nine percent), gained new practical knowledge or skills (six percent), learned how to work better in their own organizations (four percent), and formed long-lasting relationships (one percent).

Overall, Fellows keep in touch with the Institutes they went to during the U.S. exchange but more so with their own cohort which could include up to 24 individuals from different African countries, and for Fellows who engaged with the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange,



relationships were built between Alumni and U.S. counterparts, predominantly based on their experience, but also on a personal level.

### **KF 5c.3: Social Media Platforms Continue to Be the Lifeblood of Alumni Relationships and Networking**

Respondents maintain relationships and shared opportunities mainly through inexpensive or free platforms such as email, WhatsApp, Facebook, but also by telephone and in person. LinkedIn, group or personal SMS, and Twitter are used the least.

IREX is very involved in supporting and facilitating U.S. connections and networking. Their establishment of the Mandela Washington Fellowship website with Partnership page, Facebook and Twitter sites, the Fellowship Directory (<https://www.mandelawashingtonfellowship.org/directory/>), and the U.S. Summit Partnership Expo. Additionally, for PDEs, IREX works with dozens of companies, non-profits, and government agencies to develop relationships with organizations to place Fellows. These are some of the main activities IREX creates, facilitates, and supports.

Alumni mentioned conferences, funding opportunities, exchanges, and in-person visits as links to people in the United States. A few Alumni had stayed in touch with host families in the communities affiliated with the Institute.

### **EQ5D): IN WHAT WAYS FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI CONTINUE TO ENGAGE AND BUILD A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?**

Nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of the Fellowship Alum surveyed are still engaged with the USG in some way, mostly with U.S. Embassies in their countries through attending Embassy events, giving talks, applying for or receiving grants or using the American Space or Corner at the Embassies. A few maintain contact with the Regional Advisory Board or Peace Corps and with USG agencies providing funding opportunities such as through USAID and USADF. During interviews with Alumni, the evaluation team learned that some Fellows (who were not interviewed) totally disconnect from the Fellowship upon return home for a variety of reasons, such as (but not limited to) living too far to be engaged with Alumni activities, lacking interest, feeling burnout from the intensity of the Fellowship, personal and family reasons, or going back to school.

### **KF5d.1: U.S. Embassies Are Central to Maintaining Relationships with and Among Fellows and Engaging Potential Fellows**

Many Fellows have been and are engaged with the U.S. Embassy, having initial exposure with a pre-Fellowship interview, participating in post-Fellowship debrief, being invited to or co-hosting events, applying for grants, using the American Space/Corner, and being involved in the Alumni Association or Council. Fellow engagement depends on Embassy locations and offerings, their own time and interests, and Embassy involvement with Alumni Associations. For example, several Kenyan Alumni said that their Alumni network was not active, but Alumni in South Africa mentioned that the Embassy had travelled around the country to recruit prospective Fellows, hosted a skills day in which some attendees won tickets to a Beyoncé concert, and brought speakers from 15 countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to talk about the Fellowship tracks.



*“Pre departure activities—they are very good. They set a high expectation in terms of quality and what their conduct should be (it’s not a vacation). Part of my criticism was because the expectations laid out were not met, but [it] was good at connecting South African Fellows, and they spent a lot of time during the Fellowship updating each other through WhatsApp. The U.S. Embassy does a good job creating networking events post-fellowship.”*  
*Business & Entrepreneurship track, South African Fellow*

Some Embassies and Alumni organize community service days, such as one in Kenya to clean up a slum area near the Nairobi River. A few Fellows said that Alumni Associations have organized events, brought in speakers, hosted training and helped recruit or interview prospective Fellows. Often these actions were coordinated with or by U.S. Embassies, and sometimes the Alumni Association receive USG funds. A smaller number of Alumni who responded they had not built relationships with U.S. Embassies said that they had not been required to do so (post-Fellowship), were too busy, or had tried to contact the Embassies but gotten no response. Other Fellows were living outside their home countries, had personal or family issues that prevented them from keeping in touch with the Embassies, or simply had no valid reason to do so.

U.S. Embassy and USAID staff interviewed mentioned that in Cameroon, five Reciprocal Exchange Awardees had maintained contact with Alumni and that businesses were doing better and running more smoothly as a result. A USADF staff member noted one Fellow’s business success:

*“[He] applied for a \$10,000 grant to take bananas from post-harvest loss and turn it into enriched flour with banana and baby foods. He now makes \$100,000!”*

Overall, the U.S. Embassies act as important foundations for Fellows who return home to advance their skills and projects, continue and build on relationships and Alumni networks, and solidify relationships with the U.S.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **C5.1. The Fellowship and its Structure Have a Positive Impact on Future Leaders in Africa and United States Ties with Africa**

The U.S.-based components of the Fellowship are fostering strong ties between the United States and Africa. The PDE give Fellows firsthand, hands-on opportunities in American companies, businesses, NGOs and other organizations to broaden their experience in the United States in a new way. In return, the PDE Host Organizations broadened their knowledge of African cultures and ways of thinking and working. U.S. Embassies play an important role in facilitating networks, maintaining relationships begun in the United States and supporting Alumni Associations. Embassies provide space, technical assistance, referrals, and opportunities for funding.

### **C5.2. The Fellowship Facilitates Positive Africa-to-Africa Relationships**

Africans learned about each other’s countries as well as the United States through the Fellowship cohort. Deep and lasting relationships are formed between Fellows during the intensive six weeks in the United States, which continue after their return home. Fellows

attend each other's weddings and share attendance at conferences, funding opportunities, work-related advice and invitations to speak and teach. Post-Fellowship activities and particularly Alumni Associations or Councils bring Fellows together and strengthen relationships. Volunteer activities often inspired by American's commitment to "give back" to their communities witnessed as part of the fellowship, motivated Fellows to try to make a difference in their own countries.

### **C5.3. The Reciprocal Exchange Component Builds Positive Relationships Between Professionals and Fellows**

The Reciprocal Exchange was designed as an innovative way to support Fellows with special projects and to develop new ways of thinking about their businesses, new products, and teaching techniques. Although the Reciprocal Exchange is only a small part of the Fellowship, its impact has been significant, positive and worth continuing, if not expanding.

## **EVALUATION QUESTION 6**

*How does the Fellowship's U.S. exchange support the following foreign policy goals?*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

The Mandela Washington Fellowship and post-return engagement is contributing to USG foreign policy goals in a number of ways. Skills learned at the Institutes and observations of American governance in a democratic society are making strong impressions on the Fellows, which they carry back to their home countries and apply in their workplaces. These skills influence their management style, approach to challenges, and – to some extent – benefit their community economies. Many continue to engage with the USG, primarily through U.S. Embassies. Overall, the Fellowship and post-return engagement with Fellowship activities, networking and funding opportunities are building positive relationships and ties with the United States.

### **EQ6A) HOW DOES THE FELLOWSHIP'S U.S. EXCHANGE STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE?**

The Fellowship gave many Africans their first opportunity to visit the United States, where they were able to see firsthand how democratic institutions work at a local, regional, or national level. In interviews with Alumni across the board, the evaluation team heard that Fellows were inspired by the town halls, council meetings, and/or local government conversations in which they participated.

### **KF 6a.1. Fellows Experienced Democracy and Governance Firsthand at Local, Regional, and National Levels in the United States**

The U.S. Exchange gives Fellows opportunities to experience democracy and governance in different settings. This real-time experience, complementing academic training with experiential learning, has profound impacts on the Fellows.

*"...one of the goals at the outset of the program [was] the idea of public diplomacy and how democracy works internally and abroad ... our state and municipal government ... engaged the Fellows ... and used Fellow experiences when thinking about local discussions. It's really incredible to*

*see how [the Fellowship] has affected local government all the way up to federal level.” Institute Staff Member*

Institute respondents said that they felt the academic programs, lectures by government representatives, political events (such as townhalls), and U.S. Ambassador visits have contributed to the Fellows’ understanding of United States democracy and governance. The lessons Fellows mentioned taking back to their countries are many, including fighting corruption and building a trusted government. Faculty said Fellows had learned valuable skills to become better leaders and strengthen democratic governance, but that there had also been lively discussions with the Fellows on the differences between the United States and their own countries.

*“Informed citizens will become more active in their communities, become more effective and enlightened leaders. Fellows learned from the U.S. experience how government, private sector and community work together to serve the community, and hopefully they will apply this principle in their communities and demand the same from their leaders enhancing democratic practices.” Institute Staff Director*

Some respondents suggested changes to strengthen the Institute experience. One Institute respondent said that eight weeks or more would be needed to unpack differences in U.S. and African governance and economic structures. Another, a student coordinator, felt that more could have been done by the Institutes to weave these differing government structures together.

## **KF 6a.2. Fellows Applied Democracy and Governance Skills on Return to Their Countries**

The Fellowship program aimed to equip Fellows with skills and training to strengthen democratic institutions and governance on their return home. Fellows learn about democratic principles through coursework and personal experience during the Fellowship. They remarked on the openness, transparency, flexibility, teambuilding, and discussion of peoples’ opinions in the United States, which differed from how things worked in their countries, particularly countries in conflict. Sixty-five percent of surveyed Alumni agreed that the Fellowship has equipped them to do this. Roughly one-sixth of those who agreed mentioned skills they could apply at home as well as a better understanding of the United States’ democratic system. Some said they have become bolder, challenge corruption, and advocate for improvements. Fellows mentioned a variety of take-home lessons: better understanding of the meaning of democracy, becoming better citizens, realizing that their voices counted, noticing the gap in civic education in their home countries, becoming involved in elections and even voting for the first time.

*“Before the fellowship, it really didn't matter to me about democracy and elections. I always thought I can't change anything and it was just a waste of time. But I later realized that the future is what we are looking to improve. Everyone is entitled to a say, even when we may not agree with that say. It should involve all and should tolerate all.” Civic Leadership track, Zambian Fellow*

Many learned leadership, civic responsibility, and advocacy for justice. Alumni also relayed learning skills needed to improve democratic processes; building alliances, better listening, inclusive decision-making, speaking freely and allowing others to speak, not being afraid of being judged, more effective leadership, communication and honesty. Others learned how to engage in community service and create networks within the Fellowship and their local communities. One Alumna noted she could appreciate her country's democracy now, another felt he could now govern with more structure. Some said that they used these skills daily, while others said that becoming more democratic is a long process. In all, skills learned during the Fellowship are directly applicable for the majority of returning Fellows, where they put these skills into action.

*“During my Fellowship, I interacted with various government officials in Virginia and learned a lot about policy issues in the United States. When I returned from the Fellowship, I joined hands with some of my Nigerian cohorts to organize training for some public servants based on the YALI network online courses for Public Management. Also, through the Fellowship, I have been able to resuscitate my NGO, which is aimed at promoting reading and civil education among young people. I am positive that my initiative is currently strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions in its own little way.”* Public Management track, Nigerian Fellow

Around one-fourth (28 percent) of respondents answered “neutral” to the question on if the Fellowship had equipped Fellows with skills and training to strengthen democratic institutions and governance on their return home. These respondents said that they were not interested in politics or not involved in that sector; that democracy and governance was not an objective of their work; that they had learned about servant leadership, not democratic governance; they were not taught about it in their track, such as Business & Entrepreneurship; or because the Institute did not focus on that area. Some noted that contexts differ across the continent, and certain kinds of work and more autocratic governments might not be receptive to the approaches they saw in the United States, although these approaches might be easier to implement at the local level. Others (about six percent) who disagree that they gained/applied these skills stated that they did not work in that area or U.S.-style democracy would not work in their countries.

African community members who know Fellowship Alumni were asked if the Fellowship had helped strengthen democratic institutions in their countries or communities. Some found this question challenging either because they were uncertain of the Fellow's role before or after in strengthening their countries' democratic institutions or it may not have been relevant. A few, however, said that the Fellows they knew speak up more at work, have new ideas and might be able to help change the political situation. Another said a Cameroonian Alumnus became a consultant to some political leaders and is strengthening their capacity to govern democratically.

EQ6B) HOW DOES THE FELLOWSHIP'S U.S. EXCHANGE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING FOREIGN POLICY GOALS: SPURRING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (E.G., CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL ECONOMIES, JOB SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT—FOR U.S. AND AFRICAN PARTICIPANTS)?

**KF 6b.1. Both U.S. And African Participants Leverage Learning, Funding, and Networks to Strengthen Job Skills and Create Employment**

Three-fourths (77 percent) of Alumni from all tracks who were surveyed agreed that the Fellowship had advanced the U.S. foreign policy goal of building business leaders and enterprises to stimulate economic growth and employment. As a result of the Fellowship, Alumni have started new businesses and NGOs, hired more staff, brought on interns or developed new strategies for community or professional work. Many of those who received grants used the funds to train and employ more people. More than 10 percent of respondents who receive funds mentioned increasing employment, and others mentioned gaining access to more opportunities or becoming more productive, while less than five percent of respondents said there have been few or no economic benefits for their communities. Among the Fellowship's contributions to economic growth and prosperity in their countries mentioned by Alumni were personal growth (e.g., courage to work in a conflict zone in Cameroon, teaching co-workers their rights, being promoted, and earning a higher income) and business growth (e.g., creating employment for up to 5,000 people).

*"The [Fellowship] has given me the courage to lay down my life to reduce youth radicalization in my community, to advocate for a ceasefire to stop the killing of civilians and military in my community by piloting a digital civic education campaign that will dilute tempers and reason to drop [sic] guns. I have been able to create a safe space where the youth voices can be heard to call for a ceasefire and for dialogue." Civic Leadership track, Cameroonian Fellow.*

*"In Ventures Platform, one of the things we do is help grow businesses, and many of our startups raise funds in millions of dollars and that creates impact and can affect GDP of a country." Business & Entrepreneurship track, Nigerian Fellow*

Most Alumni respondents (81 percent) agreed that the Fellowship has given them valuable job skills (networking, leadership, partnerships, public speaking self-confidence) to use back home. Several have started businesses and mentored others.

*"The fellowship helped me build my self-confidence, which in turn has been allowing me to leave my comfort zone, face very challenging situations and deal with them more naturally." Civic Leadership track, Angolan Fellow*

*"My capacity as an entrepreneur and business leader has been tremendously improved, and this has led to growth in my business including employing new staff." Business & Entrepreneurship track, Nigerian Fellow*

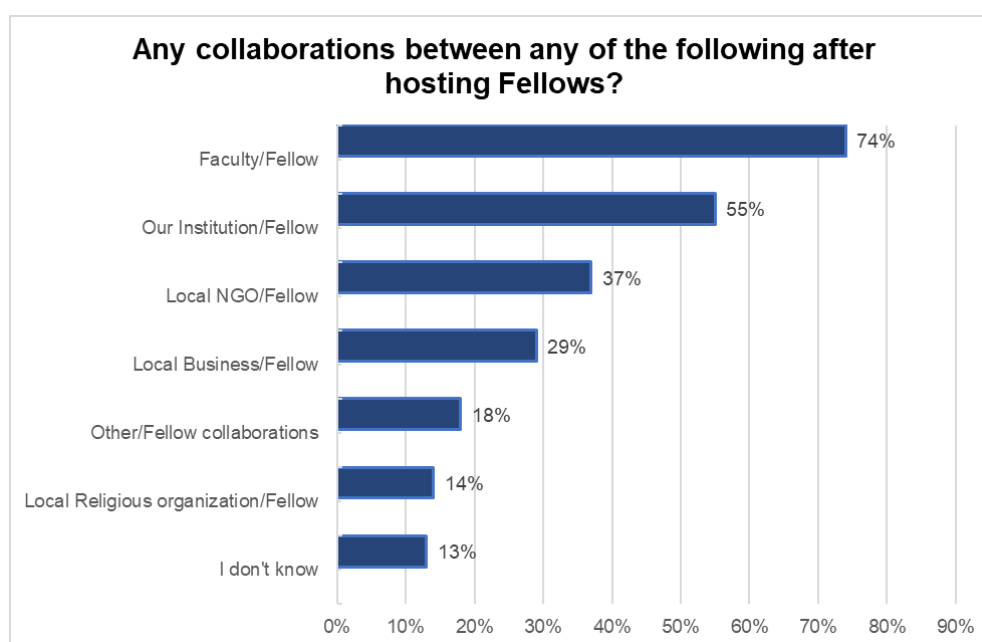
Only a few African community members could answer the question of what Fellows have brought back to their communities to strengthen the local economy or develop their communities or organizations. Those who did answer, mentioned that Fellows/Alumni have organized programs on digital rights, community outreach, GBV and reproductive health; secured scholarships for children from conflict areas; organized groups to improve work efficiency; and, helped develop the transport sector along the Nigerian border in Cameroon.

#### EQ6C) HOW DOES THE FELLOWSHIP EXCHANGE BUILD STRONGER TIES BETWEEN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES?

The academic training, visits and events, Summit, Reciprocal Exchange, and PDE experiences equip most Fellows to try out new skills in their workplaces and communities and gave them confidence to support more transparent and democratic processes and contribute more to society. Many of these Fellows were already active in these areas, but their involvement in the Fellowship and follow-on activities, as well as their increased networks and social capital, helped many have a larger impact in their fields and on their communities, many of which built ties or strengthened ties with the United States.

#### KF 6c.1. The Fellowship, Reciprocal Exchange, and PDE Foster Fruitful Joint United States-Africa Ventures

About three-fourths (77 percent) of the U.S. community members (associated with the Institutes) surveyed agreed with the statement that hosting Fellows has helped them build stronger ties with people from sub-Saharan Africa. **Figure 12** shows the kinds of collaboration generated by hosting Fellows at Institutes.



**Figure 12. Post-Fellowship Collaboration** [Source: Academic and Leadership Institute Survey]

Other interactions described were between other Fellows, community members, summer staff, students, interns, and (in one case) collaborations with Africa Live Network TV. U.S. community members said that the Fellowship has expanded their networks, allowed them to visit people in new places or given them a place to stay. A number said these relationships have continued.

*“The Fellows provided such a positive experience that we have made plans to visit the area [where] all of the Fellows we hosted live in Africa.”*  
Community Service Organization member

*“They bring new ideas and energy to our community and help us make friends across borders. What could be more important?”* Peer  
Collaborator/Mentor

U.S. community hosts who disagreed that the Fellowship built stronger ties with people from sub-Saharan Africa believed that their time spent with Fellows had been too short.

New ideas and new ways of working developed during the Fellowship translated into productive collaborations with the United States. For example, a Zimbabwean Alumni had learned to develop materials for tourism and help decision-makers find new ways to develop township tourism. Alumni applied Design Thinking, a popular topic taught in at a number of the Institutes, into workshops. One Reciprocal Exchange Awardee said that their Alumni partner developed his own IT consulting firm, aided by the Reciprocal Exchange.

Reciprocal Exchange Awardees were asked whether they planned to continue or expand collaboration with Fellows they had partnered with or whether any new partnerships had arisen as a result of previous collaboration. One Awardee mentioned working with a Sudanese Alumnus on proposals, and another said he had made frequent visits to continue developing documents, materials, and proposed activities with the Amagugu Heritage Trust in Zimbabwe. All Reciprocal Exchange Awardees interviewed are in touch with their Alumni partner completing the Reciprocal Exchange project and planned to continue collaboration.

*“[I] continued collaboration with a Fellow who was a keynote speaker at a global pathfinder summit. ... We share ideas from a business standpoint, help our organizations grow, sustain. We stay in really close contact on various items.”* Reciprocal Exchange Awardee

### **KF 6c.2. Funding Helps Further Strengthen United States-Africa Bonds**

More than two-thirds (65 percent) of staff of businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, medical facilities and nonprofits that had hosted Fellows for PDEs agreed that the experience have helped their organizations build lasting and productive relationships with people or organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. Exchanges with Fellows, particularly business-related exchanges, have benefited both U.S. and the African organizations. YALI, USADF and other grants are important catalysts for United States-Africa ventures.

*“Our organization has donated used laptops to an NGO that was formed by two Fellows. And I serve on the board of their NGO. And one of the Fellows returned to the U.S. to visit our CEO and discuss further collaborations. I have a reverse exchange application in related to further collaborations.”* Health and Education PDE Host

Less than half (41 percent) of Alumni surveyed agreed that they have established joint ventures, organizational partnerships, or linkages with other Americans or Alumni as a result of the Fellowship. Of those Alumni, 23 percent participated in a PDE, 14 percent in a



Reciprocal Exchange, and five percent participated in both a PDE and Reciprocal Exchange. Linkages mentioned included establishing or assisting in establishing joint ventures (23 percent), partnerships with U.S. or other organizations (50 percent), connections with Americans or other Alumni (62 percent), and other types of linkages (seven percent), such as Leadership Conversations, research, and jointly seeking funding for joint projects.

*“I’m currently part of a global network for civic education as a result of a partnership with a U.S.- based organization.” Civic Leadership track, DRC Fellow*

*“I got funding for three research projects to improve the diagnosis and management of the blinding stage of trachoma (an infectious blinding eye disease) from the Task Force for Global Health. During my stay in Atlanta, I had a chance to present my vision and project plans at the Task Force for Global Health staff, which I believe helped my grant.” Public Management track, Ethiopian Fellow*

Finally, another indicator of United States-Africa collaboration, Alumni were asked whether they had imported American goods or services as a result of networks formed during the Fellowship. Only a small percentage (18 percent) of the Alumni surveyed said that they have received or purchased American goods or services as a result of Fellowship contacts. Goods included electronic equipment (phones, laptops and software), clothing (e.g., donated dresses for girls), fruit dehydrators, cosmetic products, beekeeping equipment, film equipment, school materials, books, a car, and rock-climbing equipment. Several Alumni considered consultancies in the United States to be U.S. goods (e.g., a services export).

## CONCLUSIONS

The Fellowship’s U.S. exchange program has contributed to the U.S. foreign policy goals of strengthening democratic institutions and governance, spurring economic growth and prosperity, and strengthening ties between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa.

### **C6.1. Examples of United States Democracy are Powerful Models for the Fellows**

An important aspect of Fellows’ learning is witnessing democratic models and processes in the United States, sometimes in contrast to governing styles in their home countries. Survey and KII responses indicated that this experiential learning might have been more impactful than the theoretical knowledge that Fellows learned at the Institutes. Meeting U.S. senators, sitting in town halls, listening to debates between Republicans and Democrats, hearing speakers at the Summit in Washington, DC, working in organizations and agencies during the PDE, and partnering with Americans in the Reciprocal Exchange has helped them assimilate democratic and governance skills. These include respecting diverse opinions, being sensitive to the needs of marginalized groups (disabled, LGBT, women, the poor), practicing servant leadership, giving back to the community and volunteering. It has helped Fellows shift their work ethic and appreciation of the value of networks and collaboration and has helped them become more effective change agents.



## C6.2. Leadership Skills Are Critical for Fellows to Apply What They Learned About Democracy and Good Governance to their Own Countries

Leadership skills can enable Alumni to activate previously excluded groups, encourage adoption of democratic rules and practices, organize citizens to insist that governments serve them and are accountable and secure policy changes. The Fellowship has helped Fellows learn transferable skills and expand their professional networks through the Leadership Institutes; Fellowship Summit, meetings with U.S. leaders; and PDEs with USG agencies, NGOS and companies. These experiences have had a significant impact on Fellows' attitudes to leadership, instilling an ethos of values-based servant and transformational leadership in most of the Alumni surveyed and helping many solidify their leadership roles in their own organizations. U.S. Embassies, the YALI network, USAID, DOS and other partners provide ongoing professional development and networking opportunities, as well as support for ideas, businesses, and organizations.

## C6.3. Collective Fellowship Experiences Strengthened U.S.-Africa Collaboration and Relationships

Fellows used their newfound networking, proposal writing, and communications skills to apply for funding from the USG and other sources. Ongoing U.S.-Africa collaboration and communications through funding opportunities has helped strengthen ties between the two continents. Coupled with their leadership skills, this funding in some cases helped increase employment, particularly for youth, and improve their communities. Relationships developed in all components of the Fellowship between Institutes, PDE host organizations, and Reciprocal Exchange Awardees created or strengthened U.S.-African ties. Most of these relationships are ongoing, and some have had a multiplier effect. U.S. Embassies continue to play an important role in forging ties among the Fellows, their networks, and their communities and the United States.

## EVALUATION QUESTION 7

*How can ECA shape the next phase of U.S.-based Mandela Washington Fellowship programming?*

### KEY FINDINGS

EQ7A. WHAT ASPECTS OF THE US EXCHANGE DID ALUMNI FIND MOST AND LEAST USEFUL/BENEFICIAL?

### KF 7a.1: Fellows Benefitted Most from their Time at the Institutes

When asked which of 10 aspects of the U.S. exchange listed below contributed most to their personal and professional goals, the majority of Fellows identified their time at the Academic and Leadership Institutes to be the most beneficial (**Table 5**).

*Table 5. Most Beneficial Program Components*

Program Component	Number who ranked it #1	Percentage of Total
Academic and Leadership Institutes	516	65 percent
Networking	82	10 percent
Professional Development Experience	55	7 percent
Washington DC Summit	40	5 percent
Community Service	40	5 percent

<b>Engagement with U.S. Community Members</b>	35	4 percent
<b>Pre-Departure Orientation</b>	8	1 percent
<b>Reciprocal Exchange</b>	5	1 percent
<b>Post-Program Debrief with Embassy</b>	0	0 percent
<b>Other</b>	15	2 percent

The Fellows spent the majority of their time at the Institutes in the United States, and this was where many of them developed their deepest connections. Many fellows provided positive feedback on the Institute curriculum and noted that in addition to developing their leadership skills, they also strengthened other competencies such as public speaking and fundraising. One Fellow from Nigeria explained,

*“I [learned] about servant leadership. Interreligious tolerance and effective communication. I discovered my hidden skill of being able to teach others and also empathise with others.” Civic Leadership track, Nigerian Fellow*

Some Fellows were exposed to new ways of approaching their work, such as through social entrepreneurship and training on design thinking. Others noted how helpful they found case studies and the practical application of the concepts to be. Fellows referred to their experiences as “eye-opening” and “transformational.”

Fellows appreciated having the opportunity to develop relationships with faculty and staff at their Institutes. Many were grateful for access to professors who were experts in their field and valued the experience of being on an American university campus and exploring the resources they had to offer. Fellows also benefitted from interactions with peers and credited them for helping to inform new perspectives. For some Fellows, these interactions broadened their knowledge of Africa and the experiences of those from other parts of the continent. As one Fellow explained,

*“I learned a lot from my colleagues from other countries and from U.S. professionals. This has helped my world view [become] much broader and [a] deeper sense about Africa. Through this, I have also built relationships that will last for years.” Civic Leadership track, Ghanaian Fellow*

#### **KF 7a.2: Fellows Benefitted Least from the Post-Program Debriefs with Embassies**

Fellows benefitted the least from the Post-Program Debriefs that were held with Posts upon their return to their home countries. Fellows from seven countries noted never having such debrief sessions. As one Fellow explained,

*“We never had a post-program debrief with the Embassy... no information [on] how might we work with the Embassy on community projects for sustainable development.” Business & Entrepreneurship track, Congolese Fellow*

Those Fellows who did not have a debrief noted how they missed out on an experience. Another issue mentioned by Fellows was that the debriefs often took place while PDE

recipients were still in the United States. This is problematic because those attending did not have the benefit of including PDE Fellows in their conversations and next steps, and also challenging for those who did the PDE who had separate debrief sessions without the other Fellows.

*“We drew up a plan to implement during the post-program debrief with the Embassy. So far, no one has followed up on the plan which makes the whole exercise futile.” Civic Leadership track, Ghanaian Fellow*

Data collected indicate that the level of involvement among Embassies varied significantly by country and program year. Some Embassies were quite active with local Alumni, engaging them frequently and organizing events for them to reconvene, while others had minimal contact. This created challenges among Fellows as cohort members shared experiences and became aware of these differences.

## EQ 7B: WHICH ASPECTS OF THE U.S. EXCHANGE WOULD FELLOWS CHANGE?

### **KF 7b.1: Varying Content in the PDO Sometimes Left Some Fellows Unprepared**

Several Fellows from Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan, and Mozambique indicated that the U.S. Embassies that provided their orientations could have been better informed and prepared. The Fellow from CAR, for example, explained that he did not receive a clear explanation of the travel support for travel expenses after they returned from the United States. Of those Alumni who identified the Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) as an area in need of improvement, many of them noted that they were not as prepared for the Fellowship as they could have been. Fellows shared that they would have liked to receive more specific details and practical information regarding the Fellowship, and indicated that they would have liked more guidance on how to approach partnership with organizations in the United States,

*“Also speak on difficulties that have been faced by fellows previously so that current fellows can learn from it (Like sexual harassment issues, what to do and where to report).” Civic Leadership track, Ethiopian Fellow*

*“To share both positive experience in the USA and hint on possible negative [experiences] to avoid fellows giving up even before the end of the fellowship or being depressed during the fellowship.” Civic Leadership track, Lesothan Alum*

Fellows were interested in learning more specifics about the program and how they should best navigate things to maximize the experience, contribute to the cohort, and go into the experience with the right mentality. Another idea that was emphasized in many interviews with Fellows and U.S. Embassy staff was managing expectations. As one Fellow explained,

*“The pre-departure orientation should focus more on managing fellows’ personal expectations. For example, some fellows once in the U.S. would demand for the institute to include “engineering topics” just because they are engineers. Yet at the time of the application, the program clearly specifies that the focus is on “leadership”. Eventually, some would label*

*the program not a success which I personally feel is not correct in that respect.” Energy Institute Fellow*

Another Fellow from Zambia shared that at his Institute when Fellows arrived, they tried to influence and drive the content so that it fit their respective backgrounds. He felt that his PDO did a good job of providing training on social integration and ways to reduce culture shock, but that it could have done more to manage expectations around Institute content. As a result, the first 3-5 weeks of his Institute were impacted by Fellows trying to push the program in different directions, and it took many weeks for the Institute to adjust expectations and get everyone in alignment. He reflected,

*“From the initial phase, it was difficult to get everyone on board and people would complain that they were not getting anything out of it.”  
Energy Institute Fellow*

### **KF 7b.2: Program Components Were Not Always Aligned with Fellows’ Expectations**

When asked about a variety of program components such as the Institute curriculum, community service, networking events or PDE, a theme among the responses from Fellows was that they were “not relevant” to their professional goals. This was especially a challenge at the Institutes where Fellows from different sectoral backgrounds and at different points in their careers shared one curriculum. Several fellows felt that the content was too theoretical and not practical enough to be useful, while others emphasized that the content was not relevant enough to their specific professional profile. Attempts to accommodate the interests of the entire group sometimes led to content that was deemed generic. One Fellow from Madagascar noted that the academic content could be found on the internet. In other cases, the Institute curriculum and activities tended to skew toward certain backgrounds leaving others feeling left out. Fellows explained,

*“My academic institute did not align with my professional goals...  
Grouping people together in energy, environment, health, governance,  
agriculture, etc. made it difficult for the university to meet our individual  
professional goals.” – Public Management track Ghanaian Fellow*

Some Fellows felt that the American content did not always apply to their country contexts and suggested that it could be more relevant by adding discussions of African case studies and challenges. The theme of different aspects of the program not being “relevant” was consistent throughout the Alumni survey data. Some Fellows did not see the value in carrying out community service activities that were not relevant to their professional backgrounds. Others found networking events frustrating because there was no one in attendance who was relevant to their interests. Feedback on the PDE was similar as some Fellows did not find the experience to align with their goals.

### **KF 7b.3: Challenges with the Selection Process for PDE and Reciprocal Exchange**

Fellows shared very similar feedback about the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange opportunities. Of the 124 fellows who provided feedback on the need to improve the PDE, over one-third of them indicated that the program needed to be expanded so that more Fellows have the opportunity to participate. Fellows were especially eager to experience in the PDE because of the ability to learn from an American professional environment, gain hands-on experience,

and apply more practical skills. Much of the feedback focused on the limit of 100 placements being too small. Fellows noted that the program could be improved by extending the opportunity to more Fellows.

*“Everyone selected for the fellowship should be given the chance to participate in the PDE. [N]ot participating should be a personal choice. What happens now is a second selection among the selected.” Public Management track, Congolese Fellow*

A Fellow from Benin suggested that one way to provide this experience to a greater number of Fellows could be to open online opportunities with large institutions. This would allow participants to engage remotely but still gain some professional experience and exposure to American organizations. Several fellows also raised the idea of shortening the duration of the PDE in order to allow all Fellows to participate. While fewer Fellows provided feedback about the Reciprocal Exchange program component, those who did shared similar thoughts that the opportunity should be extended to a greater number of Fellows. They noted that too few of them had the opportunity to participate and that it should be more accessible. Several Fellows shared that because this opportunity was only offered to a select group of Fellows, it created tensions among those Fellows who received it and those who did not. While some were frustrated because they applied and were not successful, others felt that the information about the process was not transparent nor was it distributed evenly across the cohort.

Other areas where the feedback on these two program components was similar were on the application and selection processes. Several Fellows emphasized the need for better communication with the applicants about the selection criteria and transparency throughout the process. One Fellow from Ghana explained that it would be helpful to have more information up front about which organizations or companies would be participating in the PDE. The suggestion was made that more feedback should be provided to applicants who are not selected. It was also suggested that the PDE experience be tied to Fellows’ Leadership Development Plans as a way of making sure that the opportunities go to the right candidates and that they are carefully developed to be in line with their professional goals. Fellows expressed frustration with the Reciprocal Exchange application process describing it as stringent and difficult to understand. There was a lack of communication around the application process that left Fellows—including some who applied more than once—unsure as to why their application was unsuccessful. They suggested having an orientation on how to apply as well as feedback on applications so that they know what to improve in the future.

Fellows indicated that the range of sectors supported by the Reciprocal Exchange needs to be expanded. They felt that there were many professional fields that seemed to be excluded from consideration. Examples of such fields include the public management track, arts for activism, fashion and textiles, and health and medical professions. Other concerns were raised about whether the same candidates get all of the opportunities and whether candidates just pick their friends for the Reciprocal Exchange regardless of their professional experience.

*“... The projects that are selected also seem to be selected on the amount of visibility they would get rather than the actual impact it would have on local communities.” Public Management track, Ethiopian Fellow*

*“It should be more targeted. It must focus on the key binding constraint areas of our communities for which we require expertise from outside.”*

*Public Management track, Ghanaian Fellow*

Similar to the feedback on PDE, questions were raised as to whether the grants were really going to the projects that were positioned to deliver the most impact and/or where the American support was most needed. Communication and expectation management around grant distribution could be improved to address Fellow concerns/perceptions.

#### **KF 7b.4: The Washington, DC Summit is Too Overwhelming for Some Fellows**

Some Fellows emphasized that the Summit was too hectic and packed, both in terms of the number of people and the schedule. A number of Fellows described their experience as overwhelming:

*“It’s just too big and quite a shock to the system after the more intimate experience at the university.”*

*Public Management track, South African Fellow*

One of the factors that contributed to this sense of overwhelm was the sheer number of people in the space, which was daunting for some Fellows. Such crowded rooms made it difficult for networking, because it was hard to meet new people and have meaningful interactions. One Fellow from South Africa suggested that a good way to improve this issue would be to separate Fellows by program track and have them in different hotels. She felt that would improve their ability to build meaningful networks within their track and attend the same workshops so that they would be empowered collectively. Another Fellow from Ghana suggested that the Summit use different venues for the Expo (networking session with different companies and organizations). He explained that having them all in one room was too disorganized, congested, and noisy, and that breaking them up might help make things more manageable for Fellows.

Other challenges that contributed to the feeling of overwhelm, were the simultaneous program and session offerings that forced Fellows to pick between several options that they were interested in, the packed schedule that made it difficult for them to have time to authentically network with other Fellows, and difficulties associated with the volume level. Several Fellows emphasized challenges around the timing of the Summit. They noted being drained from the intensity of activities at their Institutes, making it difficult for them to get involved and meet new people by the time of the Summit because they were so tired by that point in the program.

**EQ 7C: ARE THERE PROGRAM COMPONENTS THAT STAKEHOLDERS SUCH AS IREX, USAID, REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CENTERS AND RELEVANT U.S. EMBASSY PERSONNEL THINK THE FELLOWSHIP SHOULD CHANGE WITH ITS U.S. PROGRAMMING?**

#### **KF 7c.1. Embassies Face Challenges with Recruitment and Representation**

Staff from U.S. Embassies and Consulates noted challenges they were experiencing around issues of Fellow recruitment and country representation. In terms of selection criteria, staff at the U.S. Embassy in Cameroon noted that more emphasis should be placed on reviewing

applicant credentials. They explained that the Fellows who benefit the most from the experience are those who have not had exposure to the United States and/or Western Europe. For this reason, they have had to steer away from candidates with stellar credentials. It was unclear whether other U.S. Embassies are taking this approach. The Embassy in Kenya and Consulate in Cape Town mentioned challenges regarding the locational distribution of candidates. In Kenya, staff noted that rural networks are weaker and as a result they have fewer candidates. As a result, they have begun to aggressively target rural areas for recruitment. Staff in Cape Town explained the different recruiting approaches they have used to find good candidates from areas like the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape.

In the case of the Eastern Cape, the applications from that region are not necessarily as strong due to less resources in terms of academics, but through the interviews they have been able to identify very strong candidates.

U.S. Embassy personnel expressed frustration with the selection process as it does not always account for different regional populations and their needs. To recruit well requires an understanding of different regional populations and their needs, and questions have been raised by U.S. Embassies about whether or not IREX has those capabilities. Cape Town staff emphasized the importance of having application reviewers at IREX who understand South Africa and its complexities. They have taken a more active role in guiding IREX by reviewing their work and encouraging a second read of some applications based on more background context. Embassy staff noted,

*“...We do the second read and Post [Embassy] determines whether they proceed with the process... It’s more work but worth it for us... The aim is for a cohort to reflect true South Africa.” Embassy Staff, South Africa*

They suggested that the country profile list needs to be reviewed and expanded so that IREX readers have a better understanding of how the provinces are broken up. Notes from IREX readers do not match up with these contexts, and the Consulate felt that those changes could improve the process. The role of IREX in the selection process was also raised by staff at the U.S. Consulate in Lagos, Nigeria. They shared that they would be interested in seeing IREX’s preliminary rankings to see if people are slipping through the cracks when IREX does the first readings.

They explained that IREX encourages U.S. embassies to review three times the number of applications accepted, so in Nigeria if 90 people are accepted, they should read 270 applications. Instead they often read close to 400 applications.

Another aspect of recruitment that several U.S. embassies raised was to what degree they chose to incorporate Fellows in their efforts. Fellows were often integrated into outreach efforts to raise awareness of the program and speak about their experience. In South Africa, the Consulate found it helpful to activate Fellows especially in more remote areas that were harder for them to reach or where they did not receive as many applications. The Consulate in Nigeria utilized the Alumni network to have Fellows go to states that had been left out of previous recruitment. By having Fellows residing near those areas share their experiences, they were able to raise awareness of the opportunity among university populations who had never heard about it. The Consulate noted that they have limits on the extent to which they

involve Alumni, explaining that unlike U.S. embassies in other countries that integrate past Fellows on application review teams, their U.S. embassies only use USG staff.

### **KF 7c.2: The Prestige of The Fellowship Resulted in Challenges with Select Fellows Upon Return Home**

Several staff from different U.S. embassies emphasized the local prestige that came with being a Mandela Washington Fellow. The Fellowship opened doors to new employment opportunities and new networks, led to travel and funding opportunities, was well-respected by local government leaders, and gave alumni access to events through the local U.S. Embassy such as parties at the Ambassador or Consular General's homes or meetings with high-level delegations from the United States. The opportunities that come with it have led to challenges with some Fellows. For instance, according to one USAID Regional Coordinator for YALI, when USAID worked to create professional development placements with local employers, some Alumni ultimately turned down the opportunities. While this was not true for the majority of Fellows, it was noted as a trend that came up every year.

### **KF 7c.3: Clearer Communication Is Needed as to the Availability of Follow-On Funding**

ECA, U.S. Embassies, and other USG agencies provide many different opportunities for follow-on funding for Alumni. There are Reciprocal Exchange awards and link grants, which are similar to Reciprocal Exchange grants and are available for anyone from any cohort. There are also local conferences and summits that serve to amplify local efforts, and there are travel grants to support attendance at training and conferences. Some Embassies have grants to support programming that aligns to their Integrated Country Strategy goals, or that are available to support the objectives of the Public Affairs Office. Embassy staff in Kenya noted that there will now be Alumni grants available to encourage networking and cross-cohort collaboration. USAID and USADF had put together \$850K for Fellows in 2019, though Embassy staff noted that it was the last year of that support. Just as the limits to USAID and USADF funding are reached, demand among Fellows for support is as high as ever as the alumni pool continues to grow. Due to funding parameters, these expectations appear to be beyond what DOS can support.

As a staff member from the U.S. Consulate in Nigeria explained,

*“As things go people want more... We make it clear resources are not limitless... We try to give support, but resources are not always there.”*

U.S. Embassy staff in Nigeria noted that they are there for diplomatic operations and advising Fellows about how to apply for grants is not their primary work. They encourage Fellows to use the skills they developed through the Fellowship to go out and find other sources of funding. They offer returning Fellows training on grant-writing and pursuing private-public partnership as part of their reunion (post-program debriefs) to give them the tools to pursue opportunities elsewhere. They noted that some Fellows had moved ahead and been successful in securing outside support. It might be noteworthy that this level of involvement is from U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Nigeria, which are well-staffed relative to many other U.S. Embassies on the continent and may not reflect the capacities of other U.S. Embassies. It is not clear if similar efforts are occurring in smaller countries or in places with more staffing constraints. Staff at the Embassy in Cameroon emphasized the need to establish parameters with Fellows. As the Public Affairs section, they are not authorized to provide funding for Fellows to start businesses. As one staff member explained,



*“They say, why don’t you give us funds? We need to clarify it. Legally, as a U.S. Government entity, there are things we can’t do.”*

He went on to explain that they do not do development projects. These findings highlight a need to manage expectations among Fellows, but also a potential gap between the types of support Fellows are looking for and what is in the DOS’ domain to support.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **C 7.1: There May Be Value in Updating and Clarifying the Program Scope for Stakeholders**

There were several common themes among the responses from Fellows and feedback shared by U.S. Embassies such as the need to manage expectations, enforce certain program objectives, and revisit the selection strategy. Data collected suggest that efforts on the part of the USG and Alumni to promote the Fellowship cultivated feelings of primacy compared to other State Department exchange Alumni among a small percentage of Fellows. Perspectives of elitism may reflect poorly on DOS and their selection process. The Fellowship has gone to great lengths to promote a culture of servant leadership, and perhaps there is more that could be done to assist Fellows in seeking opportunities. The program has changed over time and some countries may have far fewer candidates selected now than they have in years past. These are changes associated with an evolving program model. There may be an opportunity to reflect on the objectives of the program and type of leaders it seeks to support and take actions to ensure that local messaging, the application process and Institute training content all reinforce those key messages.

### **C 7.2: Improvements Could Be Made to the Washington, DC Summit**

Key Findings indicate that some Fellows found the Washington, DC Summit to be crowded and overwhelming. There may be value in revisiting the content and structure of the event to make additional improvements based on the needs and interests of the Fellows as expressed in the feedback surveys administered each year. Perhaps an event schedule that allows for more downtime could be considered. If there are particular sites that would be of value to the Fellows, the program could explore setting up several optional site visit trips, recognizing the challenge in moving large numbers of Fellows. In response to the feedback that the event is hectic and loud, perhaps the program could consider splitting the cohort up across different nearby venues or adjusting the conference agenda so that there are more sessions with fewer people. Other ideas to scale back the intensity of the Summit could be to limit the content provided in the current timeframe, extend the timeframe to spread it out in a more manageable way, or hold the Summit earlier before the Institutes have completed their programming. It would be beneficial to continue innovating on the user-centered approach to ensure the Washington, DC Summit is successful from the perspective of the maximum number of Fellows.

### **C 7.3: Program Model Includes Multiple Tiers of Participation**

There appear to be various tiers of participation associated with the Fellowship program. The tiers include those who apply for the Fellowship program, those who are selected for the Fellowship, and those who are selected for PDEs and Reciprocal Exchanges. When Fellows return to their home countries, they often compete for local USG grants. There are other sources of competition such as where Fellows are placed, especially when some programs or

locations are deemed more desirable than others. All of these small discrepancies seem to perpetuate a Fellowship culture of “haves” and “have nots” whereby even those selected for the competitive program still come away feeling that they were denied other opportunities that their peers received. This also leads to resentment and animosity within the group as those left out of different tiers take issue with the selection process. Those involved in the Fellowship recruitment process at U.S. Embassies have pointed out the importance of offering the opportunity to those who would benefit from it most, or could make the greatest impact as a result of the Fellowship opportunity. There may be valuable insights here around the need to factor in not only which applicants are most qualified but also to consider their capacity to grow as a result of these opportunities.

There is a need for more clarity around the PDE and Reciprocal Exchange criteria and training on the application processes. There also may be value in considering alternative PDE or Reciprocal Exchange models that would allow more Fellows access to these opportunities. There may be options to incorporate online opportunities so that Fellows unable to extend their time in the United States still have a chance to apply their skills and learn about the American work culture.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are based on this evaluation report’s findings and conclusions and are organized by the Fellowship’s program components. Priority ranking is based on ranking recommendations against each other. High priority items considered to be the most important recommendations to incorporate into a program component, as they can have the most impact on program improvement, based on the Evaluation Team analyses of the data collected. The Evaluation Team understands that the recommendations are subject to budgetary and personnel constraints at ECA.

### FELLOW SELECTION AND PRE-DEPARTURE:

RECOMMENDATION: EMBASSIES, INSTITUTES, ECA IMPLEMENTING PARTNER, AND ECA COLLABORATE MORE CLOSELY TO BETTER MANAGE FELLOWS’ EXPECTATIONS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FOR THE FELLOWSHIP AND SOON AFTER ARRIVAL.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
1	Embassies, ECA, and ECA Implementing Partner	Update Pre-Departure Orientation curriculum to more directly address areas of cultural expectations (e.g., U.S. culture, differences among African societies and cultures), review current events in the United States (e.g., the state of race relations), and highlight opportunities for engagement with U.S. Embassy upon return home. Transparent discussion of various types of cultural shock that could occur will support Fellows’ preparation for an intensive 6-week period and could help mitigate some intra-Fellow conflict. Setting expectations on funding opportunities that may be available to Fellows upon return home can help Fellows forward-plan prior to their departure for the United States.	High
2	Institutes	Institutes should consider walking through ECA’s pre-departure orientation manual with Fellows as part of Week 1 orientation activities. The manual includes important expectations around the Institute’s curriculum and funding opportunities that will or will not be available to Fellows through their Fellowship engagement.	Medium
3	ECA Implementing	Work with Embassies and Institutes to develop standardized guidance related to program expectations that can be shared in pre-departure	High

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
	Partner and ECA	orientation and upon arrival in the United States. Emphasis should be placed on explaining the rationale for different program activities and why not all may align with Fellow's professional interests, and that there is value in engaging with the local American population or contributing to community service projects even when there is no tangible link to one's career goals. This will support general expectation management.	
4	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	A common suggestion/critique was that receiving Fellow profiles sooner would support tailoring the program to Fellows' interests. ECA Implementing Partner and ECA can use the cancelled 2020 program as an opportunity to determine if sending the Fellow information sooner to Institutes will make a positive difference in pre-Fellowship preparation. Assuming that many of the 2020 Fellows will become 2021 Fellows, ECA's Implementing Partner, and ECA can aim to share Fellow profiles with Institutes further in advance than the typical program lifecycle. If additional preparation time provides Institutes the ability to create a more tailored program, ECA Implementing Partner and ECA should revisit the program lifecycle to determine if there are areas to compress the application/ placement timeline (e.g., opening applications over the summer vs. the fall).	Medium
5	IREX	Create a toolkit to include examples or templates with guidance to assist the Institutes on how to tailor curriculum to include African personal and professional interests/topics as outlined in their applications. The guidance can help the Institutes design and plan networking events that are more closely aligned with the relevant Program track(s).	Medium

**RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHEN CONNECTION AMONG FELLOWS FROM THE SAME COUNTRY BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE.**

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
6	Embassies	Currently all Fellows from a particular country spend a half day together before the program commences for pre-departure orientation and then in some cases Fellows from the same country do not interact again until the Washington, DC Summit. Subject to staffing and resource constraints, Embassies should consider hosting preliminary teleconferences with the group of Fellows to do initial introductions and facilitate discussions prior to the pre-departure orientation so Fellows have the opportunity to hear from their peers and get to know them. Additionally, the pre-departure time together could be expanded in the form of a full day with interactive activities in order to strengthen the connection amongst Fellows from the same country.	Medium

**RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE AND STANDARDIZE PREPARATORY INFORMATION FOR NON-INSTITUTE U.S. PARTICIPANTS (E.G., GUEST LECTURERS, COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS).**

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
7	Institutes	Better prepare non-Institute participants (e.g., guest lecturers, community members) to contribute to the Fellows experience when in the United States by providing IREX's state-specific Fellowship fact sheets and other program fact sheets to participants prior to Fellows' arrival. This will supplement individual understanding of the goals and objectives of the program.	High
8	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Consider hosting an annual nationwide conference call where the ECA Program Team provides information about the Fellowship program and answers community questions about the Program. ECA's Implementing	High

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
		Partner and ECA can ask Institutes to share the invitation across their networks.	
9	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Work with the Institutes to standardize the information shared with community members (e.g., developing and sharing a fact sheet geared towards community members with the Institutes).	Medium

## U.S. EXCHANGE COMPONENTS OF THE MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP

### RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY TO ALLOW FOR ADDITIONAL INSTITUTE AUTONOMY IN PROGRAM EXECUTION

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
10	ECA, ECA Implementing Partner, and Institutes	Currently, many Institutes seek events that can accommodate participation of all 25 Fellows. However, as this creates logistical challenges, recommend Institutes provide multiple community service options for Fellows to choose from so they are able to select experiences that would be most meaningful for them and Fellows can have a broader reach into the community.	High
11	Institutes	Incorporate community service options into the Institute curriculum so that Fellows are prompted to consider how they might draw from this model and apply it to ideas they have to support their home communities.	Medium
12	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Currently, Institutes have highly scheduled programs due to the number of required program components and hours. While this allows for comparability across Institutes, it restricts Institutes' ability to be more creative in their programming and/or offer specialized experiences to Fellows. Reducing the number of required hours for programs can support Institutes ability to offer additional networking time, community engagement, and hands-on experiences (e.g., shadowing experiences at local organizations).	High

## WASHINGTON, DC SUMMIT

### RECOMMENDATION: ADJUST THE SUMMIT STRUCTURE AND FORMAT.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
13	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Continue to iterate on the Summit to create a more manageable environment for Fellows. Currently, the Summit experience favors Fellows who operate well in busy and crowded environments. Scaling down days and allowing additional time for reflection could help more Fellows get more out of the experience. For example, after an opening plenary at the Summit, break down the event by program track (vs. subject matter) and spread it between conference rooms in the venue. Rooms should have enough capacity for the number of Fellows interested in attending sessions, and there should be quiet spaces available to allow Fellows to network or reflect. Build in open/free time before or after the Summit to allow Fellows the opportunity to visit nearby historical or cultural sites so they do not leave the actual Summit to do so.	Medium

## POST-FELLOWSHIP RETURN

## RECOMMENDATION: EMBASSIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN POST-FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
14	ECA (in conjunction with Embassies)	ECA should develop and share a schedule of recommended events and engagements over the 12 to 24 months post-Fellowship and share this template with Embassies. This would support Embassy-structured engagement with Alumni and support Fellows as productive and engaged Alumni. This could include the post-Fellowship return debrief, events at Embassies and American Corners, and if feasible, Congressional or Executive Branch visits to the country, etc.	High
15	ECA (in conjunction with Embassies)	At the Summit, provide a printed list of the typical funding opportunities available to Fellows, including type (e.g., grant, scholarships), timing, and how to apply. Share with the Fellows how they can best prepare for applying for those opportunities, including utilizing Embassies and Alumni as resources to vet ideas and review applications.	High
16	ECA (in conjunction with Embassies)	Make post-Fellowship debriefs a uniform requirement, and be sure to include PDE Fellows, even if it means debriefing twice. Supporting Fellows' returns will help manage expectations around follow-up activities and funding, grow awareness of events, and reconnect with other Alumni.	Medium
17	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Consider alternate ways to support Public Management track Fellows when USG funds are not permissible (e.g., government employees not eligible for USADF grants). Consider U.S. Embassy or USAID support to connect Public Management Alumni with U.S. businesses, private funders, or other funding opportunities.	High

## RECOMMENDATION: STANDARDIZE POST-FELLOWSHIP CONNECTIONS WITH FELLOWS.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
18	ECA Implementing Partner	Share a Fellowship Alumni listserv with Institutes after its completion so the Institutes can then share with their networks. Allow Fellows to opt in/out.	Medium
19	Institutes	Create a database where Fellowship Alumni can find contact information for U.S. stakeholders they interacted with during the Fellowship. Institutes should have consent prior to posting contact information and allow U.S. stakeholders to opt in/out.	Medium
20	ECA	Reach out to Institutes with formal networks and databases (e.g., Presidential Precinct and Rutgers) and gather information on database/network best practices that can be shared with other Institutes.	Low

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

### RECOMMENDATION: MODIFY PDE EXPERIENCE AND EXPAND PROGRAM COMPONENT.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
21	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	The current PDE program timeline is short and limits the Fellows' ability to engage in meaningful projects in the organization where they are placed. To support continued strong relationships, and potential partnerships, consider extending the PDE after the initial four weeks into a virtual experience should resources allow (e.g., using the four weeks to identify a project for the Fellow to support, and the Fellow continues to work on the project from their home country for a pre-determined amount of time with the support of their PDE organization).	Low
22	ECA Implementing Partner and ECA	Many Fellows expressed interest in their PDE to further their professional development with an organization that maps to their aspirations. Consider expanding the PDE Program to include more Fellows. To accommodate an increase in Fellows in the PDE Program,	Low

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
		consider exploring organizations that would be willing to fund more Fellows and possibly doing an exchange with the Fellows' organization in Africa.	

#### RECOMMENDATION: PROVIDE MANAGER PARAMETERS TO PDE HOSTS.

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
23	ECA Implementing Partner	Include additional guidance in PDE Host instructions / communications on how to select optimal managers for the PDE Fellow(s) to support improved experiences. 'Optimal' is defined as managers who understand the PDE objectives, will help place Fellow in an appropriate position, and advocate for facilitating their training and application of job skills.	Medium

#### RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE

#### RECOMMENDATION: EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS COMPONENT

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
24	ECA	Initial logistics often fall to the Fellow who is partnering with the Reciprocal Exchange Awardee due to their physical proximity to the project site/locations. Review the budgetary allotment for Reciprocal Exchange projects to allow multiple Fellows to engage on a project to reduce logistical burdens and support more robust project development. Program costs could be offset by awarding fewer Reciprocal Exchange projects but increasing budgets for each project, recognizing there may be financial and human resource constraints to any expansion.	High
25	ECA and Embassies	Provide support for Reciprocal Exchange Awardees in the form of a logistics checklist (e.g., travel arrangements, visas) and connect Reciprocal Exchange Awardees to U.S. Embassy contacts soon after Reciprocal Exchange award.	Medium

#### OVERALL PROGRAM

#### RECOMMENDATION: EXPLORE METHODS FOR EXPANDING FELLOW CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

No.	Who	Recommendation	Priority
26	ECA and ECA Implementing Partner	Explore avenues to connect Fellows with Diaspora communities, who can promote further U.S.- Africa business relations, support community activities at home, and provide material and resource assistance in emergencies. For example, connect Fellows with USAID/OFDA's Humanitarian Engagement and Global Programs Team (formerly Center for International Disaster Information) who mobilize Diaspora groups to contribute resources during emergencies.	Medium
27	Institutes	In cases where an Institute is also an awardee for a TITLE VI National Resource Center (NRC) for Africa, reach out to relevant NRC hosting departments to identify areas of possible synergy. Synergy and collaboration between the NRC and Institute will facilitate Africa-focused connections in the United States for the Fellows. Additionally, Institutes may be able to leverage NRC resources for event management. NRCs have extensive Africa-centered library resources, organize community events, and have a significant number of faculty and students focused on African Studies and languages.	Low

## **ANNEXES**

All Annexes can be currently found in a separate document. Annexes included are:

- Annex I: Evaluation Statement of Work
- Annex II: Key Findings and Conclusion by Evaluation Question
- Annex III: Additional Details on Evaluation Design
- Annex IV: Social Media Research and Analysis Report
- Annex V: Data Collection Instruments – Online Surveys
- Annex VI: Data Collection Instruments – Interview Instruments
- Annex VII: Documents Reviewed
- Annex VIII: Data Map
- Annex IX: Case Studies



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